LIFE OF MOTHER JULIA

PATRUM S. J.
NEW YORK

LIFE

OF

THE REVEREND MOTHER JULIA.

MOTHER JULIA.

LIFE

OF THE

REVEREND MOTHER JULIA,

FOUNDRESS AND FIRST SUPERIOR

OF THE

SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME,

OF NAMUR.

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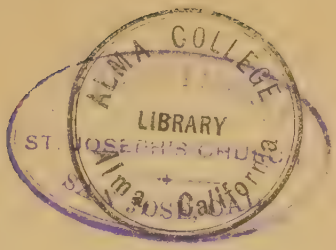

Life of the Reverend Mother Julia.

BOOK FIRST.

FROM THE BIRTH OF OUR REVEREND MOTHER JULIA, IN 1751, TO THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CONGREGATION AT AMIENS, IN 1803.

Life of the Reverend Mother Julia.*

CHAPTER I.

THE BIRTH AND CHILDHOOD OF JULIA BILLIART —HER LOVE FOR THE CATECHISM—M. DANGICOURT—FIRST COMMUNION—FIRST MANIFESTATIONS OF PIETY.

OUR Lord, who chose from the humblest ranks of life those whom he destined to convert the world, loves still to make use of the feeblest instruments, and of persons the least favored with the riches and honors of this world, for the accomplishment of his designs. We shall see a proof of this in the foundation of our Order, to which may be applied the beautiful words of St. Francis de Sales, alluding to the Order of the Visitation: "Divine Providence formed this Congregation, as he created the world, out of nothing."

Marie Rose Julia Billiart, the foundress and first Superior-General of the Sisters of Notre

* This life, first published in 1862 for the use of the Sisters of Notre Dame, is compiled from the letters of the Foundress, the valuable memoranda of Mother St. Joseph and other documents relating to the early history of our Order.

Dame, was the child of respectable and pious parents, who were more richly endowed with spiritual gifts than with the goods of this world. Jean François Billiart and Antoinette Debrène, his wife, kept a shop of groceries and drygoods, which, with a lot of land, gave them a modest competence. They resided at Cuvilly,* a village in Picardy, and here Julia, their eldest child, was born. She was baptized on the 12th of July, 1751, in the parish church of St. Eloi. Another daughter and a son were subsequently added to the family. The parents, comprehending their religious obligations, endeavored to instil sentiments of piety into the hearts of their children. Thus brought up under the sweet influences of religion, Julia, like the Holy Child of Nazareth, grew daily in knowledge and wisdom before God and man. In her very childhood, her heart was so inclined to holy things, she often retired to her little chamber to pray, and with a recollection and fervor that astonished all who saw her. Julia had a discerning mind, a clear and solid judgment, and a disposition so extremely quick that she must have suffered a great deal in bringing it into due subjection, but which, with the aid of divine grace, she succeeded in completely conquering. Sent to school at an early age, she soon learned to read and write correctly, but the study she especially

* Cuvilly is about two and a-half leagues from Compiègne.

loved, and to which she gave her whole mind, was that of the Catechism. And she made such rapid progress in the fundamental truths of religion that, when only seven or eight years old, she was capable of instructing others. In fact, from this time, manifesting the ardent zeal only to be extinguished with her life, she would gather around her, at the time of recreation, all the little children she could find, to teach them the elements of the Christian faith. She would do this with great gravity, and there was an unction in her words which made it evident the child aimed at something beyond mere recreation. Not only were her intelligent explanations of the Catechism admired, but her zeal for the salvation of souls was astonishing in a child who could, naturally speaking, have only a very imperfect idea of the importance of salvation. Julia was particularly interested in a little beggar-boy who often appeared among the others. She patiently instructed him, and exerted herself so much for his welfare that she diminished his coarseness and enabled him to obtain a place. He behaved so well that he soon obtained a better one, and so by degrees he arrived at an honest independence. Thirty years later, our dear Mother St. Joseph, who related this fact, saw the well-written letter, breathing sentiments of piety and gratitude, which the once beggar-boy wrote the kind Mother Julia, whom he regarded, after God, as the source of his prosperity.

Monsieur Dangicourt, the worthy curé at Cuvilly, who was as kind as he was enlightened, became Julia Billiart's spiritual guide. This good pastor soon noticed the promising traits of his young parishioner, and endeavored to develop them. He found her a docile pupil. She soon manifested so much discernment, especially in religious things, that the language of Scripture respecting Tobias might be applied to her: "Though young, yet did she no childish thing in her work." * God so visibly drew this child to himself, that the curé thought it proper to admit her to the participation of the Divine Eucharist before the usual age. He therefore permitted her, when only nine years old, to make her first communion privately; and the privilege of communicating on grand festivals, and even oftener. Two years after, he publicly admitted her to the Holy Table with her companions. Julia gave her young heart more and more up to God, and the abundant grace she received at Holy Communion soon became very evident, as well as her consequent advance in piety. She made such an effort to moderate the natural vivacity of her temperament that no one found any reason to complain of her disposition. Her young brother often gave her opportunities of exercising her patience; but she made such complete reparation for all the little

* Tobias i. 4.

faults she saw in herself, that, for the most part, she alone complained of them.

As Julia grew older, her filial affection led her to devote herself, as a Christian child should, to the assistance of her parents in domestic affairs, as well as in the care of the shop. As her health was good, while her sister was nearly blind and her brother a cripple, most of the housework fell on her hands. But she was so methodical that her domestic duties never conflicted with her devotional instincts, and she always found a short time after dinner to spend before the Blessed Sacrament. Here she tasted those ineffable joys that render all the pleasures of the world insipid. She always returned home animated with fresh zeal in promoting the love of God among her companions, over whom she had acquired considerable influence, and in inducing them to keep out of the way of temptation. She was never seen participating in their sports, or in public diversions. Her most delightful recreations were prayer, the reading of good books, and the instruction of others.

CHAPTER II.

REVERSES OF JULIA'S PARENTS—HER FIRST TRIALS —PARALYSIS AT TWENTY-TWO YEARS OF AGE —PERSECUTION OF THE REVOLUTIONISTS— INTERIOR TRIALS—DEPARTURE FOR AMIENS.

LMIGHTY GOD soon manifested his great designs upon the soul of Julia Billiart by a long succession of trials. She was now sixteen years of age. Until this time her family had lived in that fortunate state of mediocrity that knows neither the dangers of opulence nor the privations of poverty; and were universally esteemed for their uprightness. But they now suffered repeated reverses which embarrassed their circumstances. Calumny also, that often follows the steps of the unfortunate, aggravated their difficulties and increased their mortification. To crown their misfortunes, some burglars got into their shop by night and carried off a great part of their merchandise. Jean Billiart, already worn out by preceding reverses, could not rise above this new disaster. He sold his land to satisfy his creditors, which nearly reduced him and his family to indigence. It was now his eldest daughter became his consolation, and proved herself capable of re-

pairing, to a certain degree, his losses. She set herself to work with a courage that nothing could diminish. She helped get in the harvest and outdid all the laborers. And yet her religious duties were not neglected. She received the sacraments every week, and seemed to draw her strength from the Holy Eucharist—even the physical strength so necessary to her laborious life. Her virtue commanded the respect of the other harvesters, who never allowed themselves to utter an improper word in her presence. When resting from their labors, a time when innocence is often endangered, she induced them to sing hymns, or directed their thoughts heavenward by reading something suited to their comprehension. The good villagers did not take amiss her manner towards them. Far from revolting under the kind of authority she exercised over them, they took so much pleasure in hearing her read, and conceived such a love for religion through her conversation, that they even wished to assemble on Sundays. Besides the fatiguing labors of the field, Julia had to make frequent journeys, sometimes on foot, and sometimes on horseback, by night and day, and at all seasons, in order to dispose of their stock-in-trade as advantageously as possible, and finish settling the business of the family. For six years the austerities of Julia Billiart consisted in want of sufficient sleep and nourishment, enduring the extremes of heat and

cold, and giving herself up to constant hard labor. But our Lord wished his faithful servant to make still further advances in the way of suffering. About the year 1774, she was sitting in her house one evening, when a great stone, hurled with force through the closed window, fell at her feet, and a musket was instantly discharged in the same direction. She was not wounded, but, supposing it an attempt made on the life of her father, it gave her a shock which led to the most serious results. It caused a succession of illnesses which for thirty years gave her no rest. In the course of the seven or eight years following this unfortunate occurrence, she could sometimes work and walk a little, but in 1782 the imprudence of a physician singularly increased her disorder. An epidemic appeared at Cuvilly which seemed to require bleeding in the foot as a remedy. A physician who visited Julia at this time, unable to account for her symptoms, which were quite beyond the reach of science, was so far deceived as to suppose them to be the result of the prevailing malady. He therefore bled her so excessively in the foot that her infirmities were increased to such a degree that she was even unable to walk without crutches. Six months later, even this assistance was insufficient. She lost the entire use of her lower limbs and was confined to her bed. Sometimes she was carried about in a chair, but it was with difficulty she could endure it for fifteen minutes. To para-

lysis was joined a complication of diseases which clearly showed that God had accepted the oblation Julia had so often made him of herself, and that he had marked her as a victim of suffering. Her whole body was sometimes so racked by pain that it threw her into violent convulsions. She was reduced several times to the point of death, and in these various attacks of illness received extreme unction five times.

The grief of her aged parents and their destitution, were not the least of her afflictions. She had been their support, and now she only added to their burden. But the more the good God afflicted her, the more closely she became united to him, and the favors with which he rewarded her fidelity more than made up for the trials of her patience.

M. Dangicourt did everything he could for Julia's comfort. Every day he brought her the greatest, the only consolation this world could afford—the Divine Eucharist; and, not satisfied with giving her spiritual succor, he mentioned her case to several persons of position. Madame Baudoin, the daughter of M. Darlincourt, of Paris, a Fermier-Général, owned a small country seat at Cuvilly, where she passed the summer months with her three daughters. They were frequently visited by Madame de Pont-l'Abbé, who lived a short distance from Cuvilly in a château at Gournay-sur-Aronde. These ladies,

having heard of Julia, desired to see her. They found her so estimable in character and so attractive in her piety, that they not only wished to afford her all possible care, but passed all their leisure time at her bedside. Divine Providence thus recompensed Julia for the care she had so many times lavished upon the infirm and the aged.

With the exception of these short visits from her noble friends, her time was mostly spent in prayer. As soon as she was left alone, she returned with delight to that close union with God which was the source of all her strength and happiness. This union with him was evidently supernatural. Every day she was seen absorbed in prayer for the space of four or five hours—motionless and insensible to what was passing around her. Her face at such times was remarkable for its sweetness and serenity. Sometimes she had a high color. People went out and in, and talked around her, without her perceiving it. What passed in these moments of close communion with God? Her confessor alone knew, for she was always very reserved on this point. The Rev. Mother St. Joseph, speaking to her, long after, of this period of her life, in which she was confined to a sick-bed, asked if these lonely days of constant suffering did not seem very long. The good Mother Julia ingenuously replied that, during the first eight years of her complete helplessness, she

could not remember suffering at all from ennui. When she returned from these heavenly communications, she resumed the favorite occupation of her whole life—the explanation of the Catechism. She assembled around her bed the children who had never been instructed in the truths of the Christian religion and those who had forgotten them, and taught them in spite of her pain. She made piety so attractive that they loved it, and she showed them by her patience what sweetness is found in the practice of religion.

But Julia's piety was now to be tried by an unexpected alarm. The National Assembly, at the beginning of the Revolution, wished the clergy to submit to the civil constitution, which virtually abrogated the Catholic Church. The bishops and priests, with few exceptions, resisted this enactment at the peril of their lives. Some of them became voluntary exiles, others were banished, and a great number massacred. M. Dangicourt, so distinguished for his enlightened piety, was in great danger. He retired to Mt. Valérien, near Paris, where he died shortly after. What a trial for our poor invalid! No more spiritual aid, no sacrament of penance, no communion! A schismatic priest took the place of the legitimate pastor. Julia, strong in her faith, refused all communication with the intruder. This excited the revolutionists, because

her reputation for sanctity gave her great ascendency over the inhabitants of Cuvilly. She had already had the happiness of preserving from schism more than one hesitating or badly instructed person. Entreaties could not influence or threats intimidate her. The impious were enraged and about to use severity with "the fanatical devotee," when Mme. de Pont l'Abbé took Julia and her niece Félicité, who had the care of her, to the Château de Gournaye. But she was not long safe in this asylum. Mme. de Pont-l'Abbé was obliged to emigrate, and she died in a foreign land. She left Julia and her niece to the care of a devoted concièrge, strongly recommending them to his protection. The enemies of the church then returned to the charge, and, pretending that "the devotee" had hidden some priests, threatened to set fire to the château unless she was instantly given up. A mob gathered in the court, threatening to tear the poor infirm creature from her bed and toss her up on a coverlet. But God did not permit the execution of this shameful project. The concièrge of the château, incensed at their proceedings, harangued the mob with such effect that he induced them to renounce their design. Julia, fearing a renewal of this scene, and of endangering the property of her benefactress, decided to go away. She did not know where to conceal herself from her persecutors, who had

only postponed their plans. She was carefully concealed in the bottom of a cart, and thus passed unperceived through a furious band lying in wait for her. The two fugitives were carried to Compiègne. They arrived towards night, which they were obliged to pass in the cart in the middle of a court. Julia was rejoiced to suffer with her Divine Saviour, but the violent jolting of the cart had so exhausted her little strength that she was nearly gone. Félicité with difficulty succeeded in getting a spoonful of wine into her mouth. This revived her a little. The next morning they obtained shelter with some respectable ladies, but they soon became frightened at Julia's reputation of a *devotée*, and Félicité was obliged to seek another asylum. During the three years and a-half that she lived at Compiègne she had to change her residence four or five times, so great was her danger.

The position of our pious invalid was, of course, very painful. She was less afflicted at her bodily illness than at the long privation of all spiritual succor. But Almighty God, who destined her to lead others in the way of perfection, sent her even more trials. He made her pass through the furnace of interior suffering. The sweetness she had tasted in her long hours of prayer, and the heavenly consolations that infinite goodness had hitherto lavished on her, were taken away. This season of desolation was more painful to her than

physical suffering. After many months of endurance, Providence sent her, in 1793, M. de la Marche, an estimable clergyman of Beauvais, then living in retirement at Compiègne, who, at the peril of his life, bore spiritual succor and consolation to the pious people of the place, especially the Carmelite nuns. This priest heard Julia's confession, and gave her holy communion.

"I was struck," said M. de la Marche, "with the progress she had made in piety. She offered herself continually to God as a victim to appease his wrath. Her resignation was perfect. She was always calm, and constantly united to God, and her life one continual prayer."

Julia had not seen her chief protectress for a long time—her whom she called *la bonne dame*, and who so well merited the title. Mme. Baudoin had fled from Paris at the commencement of the political troubles. Her excellent father, Monsieur Darlincourt, had fallen a victim of the revolution, at an age of more than eighty years. This good old man had always shared his daughter's veneration for Julia Billiart, and at his death he left her an annuity of six hundred livres. After his execution, Madame Baudoin took refuge at Amiens. The people there did not take such rigorous measures as in many other cities. In 1794, she rented apartments in the Hôtel of the Vicomte Blin de Bourdon, Rue des Augustins. She had been there only a few months when she be-

thought herself of her dear infirm charge at Cuvilly, and hired for her a small room in her dwelling, which seemed providentially vacant. She then wrote her urgent letters to induce her to remove to Amiens. Julia set out in an easy berline that her *bonne dame* had sent her. In passing through Cuvilly she had the consolation of embracing her mother. Her father had died before the Reign of Terror.

Julia arrived at the Hôtel Blin in the month of October, 1794. Félicité carried her into the small apartment prepared for her. After a few days, Mademoiselle Baudoin invited one of her friends to visit Julia. This apparently casual invitation was the first step towards the accomplishment of God's designs respecting our Congregation. He now brought to the bedside of our pious invalid her future co-operator in the work she was destined soon to undertake. Possessing rank, beauty, and wealth, with a mind and heart richly endowed, nothing seemed wanting to make this lady the idol of society; but she had long since risen above the world, and her heart was detached from its ephemeral grandeurs. This lady was Mademoiselle Blin de Bourdon, subsequently Mother Julia's faithful companion, and known to us as Mother St. Joseph, the co-foundress and second Superior-General of the Sisters of Notre Dame. We must now speak of her more particularly.

CHAPTER III.

MADEMOISELLE BLIN DE BOURDON.

MARIE LOUISE FRANÇOISE BLIN was born on the 8th of March, 1756, at the Château de Gézaincourt, in Picardy. She was the third and youngest child of Messire Pierre Louis Blin, Seigneur de Bourdon, Bouin, and other places, Vicomte de Dommart, in Ponthieu. Her mother, Lady Marie Louise Claudine, was the daughter of the Baron de Fouquesolles, Seigneur de Gézaincourt, Huleux, Méricourt, and other places, Vicomte de Doulens—and of Marie Louise Damerval de Fresne, who presented her granddaughter at the baptismal font. The other sponsor was her maternal uncle, François Debuine, Seigneur du Hamel, Noyelle, etc., Chevalier of the Order of St. Louis and member of the Guard. She was baptized on the 9th of March, the day on which the church honors St. Frances of Rome, who was given her as her patron saint. Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt (which name she bore till the Revolution) was carefully and religiously educated.

When about six years old, her parents confided her to the care of the Bernardines of Doulens, among whom she made her first communion. She spent much of her childhood with her

grandmother, the Baroness de Fouquesolles, who always regarded her with particular affection. This excellent woman was regarded as the mother of the poor, and her example and counsels happily developed the natural character of her granddaughter. When about four or five years old, Frances learned the first principles of religion, and the precious seed brought forth an abundant harvest. Crying one day at the sting of a wasp, her *bonne* told her she must suffer the pain for her sins. "I have not yet sinned," replied she, drying up her tears, "but I will cry no more for the love of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Her grandmother especially sought to instil into her innocent soul a religious love for the suffering members of Jesus Christ, which, at a later day, led her to make such great sacrifices for their welfare. After her first communion, Frances was sent to complete her education among the Ursulines, at Amiens. When the young Vicomtesse returned home, she edified every one by her piety. Having very distinguished manners, Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt made such an impression at her very début in society, that it might have been a source of danger. But God had favored her with a solid and thoughtful mind, and an uncommonly correct judgment, and these valuable qualities were aided by divine grace. Our Lord made her comprehend the emptiness of all worldly honors, and at an early age she

formed a resolution to renounce them. Nevertheless, her vocation, though undefined, was to be subjected to long trials, and crossed by many distressing events. In 1783, Madame Blin was attacked by a long illness, which carried her off after ten months of suffering. Frances neglected nothing to effect the cure of her beloved mother, but it was otherwise ordered. She had, however, the consolation of seeing her pious parent prepare for that life which knows no end. Mme. Blin died on the 2d of April, 1784, five weeks after the grave had closed on her father, the Baron de Fouquesolles. Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt then returned to her grandmother, whose advanced age required her company. While there, her piety was not inactive. She was the consoling angel of all the sufferers in the parish. The poor blessed her name. Her benefits and example encouraged them in resisting the subversive doctrines then extending even to the lowest ranks of society. It is from this epoch she dated what she called "her entire conversion at thirty years of age."

The Reign of Terror succeeded that of the Bourbons. France sent her king to the scaffold. The deluded people, crying Liberty, massacred the priests and the noblesse. Pious, and of distinguished parentage, Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt was a marked victim for the fury of the republicans. Early in the year 1794, while she was

praying one evening before the Blessed Sacrament, which the curé of Gézaincourt had brought to the château for fear of profanation, she was suddenly disturbed by tumultuous cries. They came from the inhabitants of the village, who, armed with muskets, pitchforks, pikes, clubs, etc., wished to defend the entrance to the château against a band of revolutionists who had come to carry off the Baroness de Fouquesolles and her granddaughter. The Vicomtesse, wishing to brave the storm, presented herself to the gendarmes, who, struck with the calmness and dignity of her deportment, stammeringly made known the orders they had received. The villagers on their side protested that, while a drop of blood remained in their veins, they would not allow their mothers to be carried away. The ruffians, finding themselves inferior in numbers, pretended to be intimidated by their menaces. To decide the matter, they promised Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt to leave the Baroness at the château if she would consent to accompany them, and induce the peasants to lay down their arms. After two hours' debate, seeing there was no other resource, she accepted the proposal, glad to save the life of her grandmother even at the expense of her own. She therefore set off at two o'clock in the night, in a vehicle drawn by four working-horses, escorted by the republican band. A faithful servant fol-

lowed her at a distance, though forbidden by the gendarmes. Enquiring where they were taking her, she was told they were forbidden to say, and that she should trust herself to the Republic. "I felt at that moment," said she afterwards, "the whole force of my nature revolting at the approach of a sudden and violent death. But those moments of anguish were not of long duration. I offered up to God the sacrifice of my life, imploring strength to resign myself to his adorable will. Prayer restored calmness to my soul." Towards six o'clock in the morning, they arrived at the gates of Amiens. Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt was conducted to the Maison d'Arrêt, otherwise called the House of Providence, where she learned that her father, brother, and some other members of her family were already confined. She begged to be allowed to join her father, but did not obtain permission. The Republic wished to add to the other sufferings of its victims the anguish of separation from all they held dearest. It was only a part of their torture to be crowded together in scores, deprived of air and liberty, daily witnessing one another's despair at hearing of the execution of some of their friends, and constantly expecting their own sentence to the scaffold.

Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt was not, however, the most to be pitied. A devoted concièrge brought her family the food necessary for the prolonging of their sad lives. The other prisoners

often dared not touch the food given them for fear of being poisoned. A new sorrow awaited Frances. On the 18th of March, 1794, she received a letter informing her of the death of the Baroness de Fouquesolles. The arrest of her granddaughter had been a death-blow to her loving heart. She immediately lost her reason, and from that moment could not be persuaded to take any food. "No," she would say when they endeavored to conquer her obstinacy, "I will wait for *la petite*." But *la petite* did not come, and the venerable lady soon sank.

The government allowed the prisoners the choice of being transferred to the monastery of the Carmelite nuns, which had been converted into a house of detention. "How many do you think accepted this proposal?" asked our Mother St. Joseph at a later day. "Your humble servant alone." She was escorted to the monastery between two gendarmes with drawn swords in hand. This change was a great consolation to one of her piety. She found genuine happiness in the society of the good nuns, who, with their eyes fixed on eternal things, awaited in peace what it should please God to send them. The touching resignation of these holy souls was a powerful example which aided Mademoiselle Blin in supporting the last trials of that stormy period. One day, in looking over the public papers, she saw on the list of victims destined to the scaffold

not only her own name, but the names of her father and brother. "I did not give way to grief," said she; "I only redoubled my prayers that the Almighty might be our support at the decisive moment of death." Satisfied with her submission, God did not require the sacrifice of their lives.

All the prisoners were released a few days after, in consequence of Robespierre's fall. Mademoiselle Blin's nephew came one evening at the beginning of August to announce her freedom. "I have just finished my evening devotions," said she, "and will remain another night in my prison. To-morrow I will join your father." The members of this noble family, in the first joy of their reunion, after eight months of trial, did not forget to join in fervent thanksgiving to Heaven. The father, M. le Vicomte Blin, went immediately to Bourdon. Frances remained a year with her brother at their Hôtel at Amiens. It was here we left Julia Billiart.

Mademoiselle Blin became acquainted with the pious invalid, and though, naturally speaking, it would not seem as if her visits to Julia could be very agreeable, on account of the difficulty of comprehending her (Julia's speech was affected by paralysis), she took great pleasure in them, and ended, contrary to all expectations, by repeating them as often as possible. She performed a thousand little services for the

invalid. She daily read some religious book to her, administered her *tisane* when Félicité was absent, and tried to induce her to take some nourishment. A friendship, founded on religious sympathy, was soon formed between these two hearts. It became more and more firm, and brought forth, as we shall see, fruits of grace and sanctity. From a worldly point of view, it seemed astonishing that a person of such high rank, and with so superior an education, should make herself the companion of a poor infirm person. It was by a miracle of grace that the Vicomtesse de Gézaincourt discovered the treasures of Julia's soul hidden beneath suffering and poverty. She felt the powerful influences of the Holy Spirit in all the words and actions of her sick friend, and, wishing only to follow on earth the footsteps of a lowly and suffering Saviour, she joyfully accepted Julia, with the approval of her director, as a providential guide in all cases of conscience.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABBE THOMAS—FIRST SOCIETY.

IT was Divine Providence who raised up this faithful friend to be Julia's consolation and support till death. And he soon reopened to her the established sources of grace of which she had been so long deprived. I refer to the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and the Sacraments. The excellent Madame Baudoin was God's instrument in restoring these blessings. She met at Amiens an ecclesiastic whom she had known at Paris—the Abbé Antoine Thomas, a learned and pious priest, who had likewise suffered for the faith. Imprisoned at Arras by the famous Lebon, he was condemned as refractory, but his life was preserved that he might become a devoted missionary, and bring back many wandering souls into the fold of our Lord. A providential illness prevented his execution, and, soon after, he was released by the fall of Robespierre. He then went to Amiens, where he was obliged for a long time to remain concealed, and to use many precautions for his safety. As soon as Madame Baudoin spoke to him of Julia, he assiduously afforded her all the consolations of religion. The happiness of our pious invalid may be imagined. M. Thomas brought her every day the

Holy Eucharist, in spite of the danger to which he exposed himself. He soon came to reside at the Hôtel Blin. When they were so blessed as to have a priest in the house, they did not delay arranging an altar where he could say Mass. It was placed in Julia's room, but, for fear of discovery, they carefully removed every trace of it immediately after the celebration of the holy mysteries. This obscure apartment, where the Spotless Victim was offered by a confessor of the faith, and accompanied by the prayers of our two first Mothers, also persecuted for the good cause, seems like a reminiscence of the Church of the Catacombs. And, doubtless, the firm constancy of these worshippers, and their loving gratitude for the inestimable benefit which so many holy souls were deprived of, must have somewhat consoled the sacred heart of Jesus for the outrages and blasphemies of these times.

It will not be unsuitable to mention here the pious circle that was formed in the sick-room of Julia Billiart. One of its members, Mademoiselle Lise, was seventeen years old. She possessed a pleasing exterior and a gay and sprightly disposition which inclined her to the pleasures of the world; but a merciful God strove for ascendency in her young heart. It was his will that Julia should inspire her with a taste for piety. Lise was extremely attached to her, as her mother's friend, and Julia profited by this sen-

timent to incline her to choose the better part. This young lady had four friends about twenty years of age—two Demoiselles Doria, and two of the family de M——, whom she brought to her directress. These five young ladies, who were joined by Mademoiselle Blin, voluntarily assembled in the chamber of our interesting paralytic. Their respect for her eminent qualities was soon strengthened by genuine affection, but Julia, so detached from the world, endeavored to turn their hearts wholly towards God. She neglected no means in her power of inspiring them with a piety as solid as enlightened.

Madame Baudoin suffered greatly during the Revolution that was now losing ground. The death of her father, the void made in the circle of her dearest friends, the inheritance of her children at least uncertain, and their revenues for the moment sequestered, all conspired to add to her troubles. In this sad situation, she felt more and more what a treasure she possessed in Julia. She blindly followed her advice, sure that light from Heaven would be given to one who so fervently implored it. We find a proof of this in one of her letters to Mademoiselle Blin, then at Gézaincourt: "The good Julia tells me, mademoiselle, that she has written you all about our vexations. I have been in trouble so long that I begin to be inured to it. The most painful thing will be for me to go to Paris.

Julia says it is too soon to go there permanently, and that I must remain here. You know my deference to her judgment. . . . She has promised me the pleasure of seeing you again soon. Lise is impatiently expecting you."

I will relate the cause of the new vexations spoken of in this letter. First, Mme. Baudoin was obliged to change her residence in consequence of a new use made of her apartments. Then she rented a fine place as the rallying point of the little congregation. Everything seemed combined for their satisfaction and spiritual good. And they had formed such sweet plans for their life in this agreeable place. Alas! they were defeated. "My *bonne dame* is again greatly perplexed," wrote Mother Julia to Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt. "You know how fully my heart enters into all her troubles. She had rented the great château, where there is a fine chapel. . . . There was a little cell for you close to my chamber. M. Thomas was to have been our curé. But nothing remains of all these plans but the sacrifice. The gendarmerie claims the house, and our *bonne dame* cannot have it. She is the more afflicted because she will be urged to go to Paris at Easter, if she does not succeed in getting a house. She says we ought not to separate, and that she will take me with her. You know, kind friend, that I am ever disposed to do all God requires, but as Mademoi-

selle Lise is now doing so well, it would be unfortunate if this change proved injurious to her. As in all this I only seek the glory of God, I trust his mercy will order all for the best. It is his will that I should lean wholly on him, and all the providential events of my life should dispose me to leave myself entirely in his hands."

Mme. Baudoin, in fact, went to Paris several times, but Julia remained at Amiens, continuing to direct her young companions under the guidance of M. Thomas. She initiated them into the practice of mental prayer, explaining to them its advantages, and the means of increasing their love for it, and sustaining them by her encouraging words in the difficulties of this important exercise. Nothing made her so happy as to see them persevering in this practice. "My dear little Lise is progressing wonderfully," she wrote, "and her young friends imitate her in seeking God with all their hearts." And again: "Mademoiselle N. is acquiring more simplicity of character. She is as fervent in prayer as an angel. She feels that God requires many sacrifices of her, and something beyond what she has already done." Julia especially displayed great zeal for the spiritual advancement of Mademoiselle Blin, whom she called her oldest daughter, and she had the satisfaction of seeing her make great progress in the interior life. Their active correspondence—at least the letters written by

Julia, which Mother St. Joseph carefully preserved—contain many precious lessons on the spirit of prayer, and the various virtues. We should like to give the whole of these beautiful letters, but can only find room for such quotations as occasion seems to require. The following extracts are from letters addressed to the *citoyenne Blin* at Gézaincourt:

"I have not failed to thank God for your fidelity at prayer. However little devotion you may feel, you will always find it, through a spirit of faith and sacrifice, a means of advancement in the path you have chosen. This path is sometimes a difficult one, but it is something to feel that it should be so. Let us remember if the way that leads to life is strait and narrow, the goal at least is one of blessedness. The thought of eternity should quicken our courage. There we shall be more than repaid for a few moments of trial. . . .

"As for the difficulties you find in your hours of mental prayer, I do not feel disturbed about them, and I trust you do not, either. Such seasons are precious to the eye of faith. You know there are dark hours when we can see nothing. What can we do better than to wait for the rising of the sun? 'Patience!' we say to ourselves: these cloudy days are perhaps the favorable time for glorifying God. . . .

"I am not at all astonished, my dear kind

friend, at your state of spiritual insensibility. This is sometimes good for the soul, and is always so when we profit by it as God wishes. And doubtless you know what fruit we should derive from it. We should humble ourselves beneath our spiritual condition. This is our place. What does our Saviour especially love? A heart truly humble, as you know. And what can humble us more before God than to see ourselves incapable of a good thought in his holy presence? This state excites the compassion of our Lord, and obtains the strength to endure our obscurity of soul, sometimes so very painful."

Mademoiselle de Gézaincourt did not take one step without the approval of her directress, through whom she received the decisions of M. Thomas in all questions of conscience, and his advice respecting the good works in which she was constantly employed. Always distrustful of herself, she only acted according to the light she thus received. She visited the sick, dressed their sores, and had strengthening food prepared for them at the château. She encouraged them to endure their illness with patience, and not without effect. She gave Julia a weekly account of her pursuits, and here are some of her replies:

"I am delighted—yes, delighted, my kind friend, that your poor old man has come to himself. I continue to hope our good Mother will protect him. I recommend him to God in the

most heartfelt manner. Tell him so from me. I also bless our Lord for making use of you in preparing those two or three poor children for their first Communion. Yes, I trust that through the grace of God you may be useful to them. Never refuse what he demands of you. And in all this, try to preserve great simplicity of heart in your communications with him, to acquire complete detachment from self, and to aim only at doing good, and then leave all the result to God. . . .

"I have received your letter, my dear kind friend, and it affords me great consolation to see our good God evidently making use of you in teaching the young to know and love him. Yes, I congratulate you, and advise you to give yourself wholly up to this work. Receive, as sent by God, all who come to you to be instructed—thieves, bad people, and all you please. Everything is commendable when we act from a principle of charity. Try, my dear kind friend, to acquire the mental facility to accomplish all our good God requires of you. . . .

"I have heartily thanked the good God concerning your poor man. Yes, yes, here is really the finger of Divine Providence, which is a proof that the seed should always be cast into the earth, and the increase left to the good pleasure of God. I assure you I participate in the joy you must have felt. I will not forget

this good man before our Lord. How many things I shall have to tell you, my beloved friend, respecting the mercies of the Lord! How kind this sweet Saviour is! I can say no more on this subject. When you come you shall share with me, as my eldest daughter, in all the mercies of our good God."

Madame Baudoin died towards the year 1796, justly regretted by all who had the opportunity of appreciating her. Our Congregation will always preserve a tender remembrance of her whom our Mother called her *bonne dame*.

After this sad event, the five young friends lived together in M. Blin's house, which became a kind of convent. M. Thomas drew up a rule suited to the life they wished to lead, and gave it to them on the Festival of the Assumption after they had received the Holy Communion. From this time they regarded each other as sisters, and gave Julia the name of mother. They looked upon Mademoiselle Blin as their eldest sister, and regarded her with great deference as well as love. They said the Office of the Blessed Virgin in choir and united in other religious exercises. They honored the Holy Trinity three times a day by the devotion of the Gloria Patri, and the first Friday of each month they renewed the intentions of this daily practice. There was a two-fold object in the designs of God respecting the work of which they were the first-fruits—the

perfection of those who devoted themselves to it, and the salvation of others. They employed themselves from the beginning in visiting the poor and instructing them. It was edifying to see these young ladies of noble birth and eminent qualities betaking themselves to the lowliest dwellings for the solace of physical ills, or to heal the wound now eating into the very heart of society—that is, ignorance of the great truths of salvation. They taught people therefore the Christian doctrine, exhorting them to go to confession, which many had neglected for years, and endeavored especially to watch over the education of their children, for whom they found suitable places. Privation was of no consideration with these sisters when there was a question of relieving misery, and in spite of all the precautions they took at this time of political excitement to keep their reunion secret, gratitude often proclaimed their good deeds.

During the month of December, 1795, Mademoiselle Blin went on a visit to Bourdon, where her father was trying to recover from the terrible excitement of the Reign of Terror. As he was advanced in years at the time of his arrest, his sufferings had enfeebled his constitution. He was taken ill, and his beloved daughter, not yet under vows, remained to take care of him. As at Gézaincourt, she kept up a correspondence with Mother Julia, and acted according to her advice.

She resumed here her works of charity, and her father allowed her to do all the good she saw fit among the poor of the village. She profited by this permission, so in accordance with her tastes. Nevertheless, her inclination for the contemplative life increased. The happiness she had witnessed among the Carmelites of Amiens, in the height of the dangers of the Revolution, had made such an impression on her that she had resolved to join them at a later day. But Almighty God, who had other designs upon her, allowed a succession of obstacles to prevent the accomplishment of this project. Although the young ladies who had joined Mother Julia already formed the nucleus of a religious community, it is well to remark here that Julia was far from intending to found a new congregation. She was only desirous of encouraging these pious young ladies in their religious sentiments, in the practice of mental prayer, and in such good works as belong to the truly Christian life, till it should please God to make known his will respecting their vocation. Consequently, we shall see her encouraging, to a certain degree, the inclination of Mademoiselle Blin for the contemplative life, writing to her among other things: "If the good God wishes you to be a holy Carmelite, he knows what means to take to bring it about." But also in several passages she seems impressed that God destined them to share

the same life: "I feel this impression very strongly in my heart. It seems to me as if the moment were at hand when the good God would give you to me, and me to you, and so indissolubly that death alone could separate us."

Mademoiselle Blin, that she might learn the divine will, made a retreat of thirty days, under the direction of the Abbé Thomas, to whom she gave an account of her meditations and other religious exercises. Following the method of St. Ignatius, she wrote down every day her thoughts, her feelings, and the graces she received. The will of God was soon to be made manifest.

She had spent more than a year at Bourdon, when the health of the Vicomte, which at one time seemed better, gradually grew worse. She had the misfortune to lose this excellent father on the 1st of February, 1797. As soon as she had closed his eyes, she wished to go back to Mother Julia, who ardently desired her return; but the business she had to settle detained her several months longer. At last, the long-desired day of reunion arrived. The young friends received their eldest sister with tears of joy. They felt every day more strongly the truth of the text: "How good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" But it happened to the first society of Julia Billiart as to the first companions of St. Ignatius de Loyola

and of St. Alphonsus de Liguori. At the end of four or five years, Mademoiselle Blin alone remained. Her robust piety, grounded on humility, resisted every storm. One of the Demoiselles Doria, however, only left Mother Julia to enter the Convent of the Visitation at Paris, where she had been educated. Her sister married; and the three others returned to the world, and died young.

CHAPTER V.

Bethancourt — Father Varin — Return to Amiens.

THE persecution which had abated after the death of Robespierre was rekindled towards the end of 1797. The laws of the Convention respecting priests and the noblesse were again vigorously put in execution. The faithful clergy once more sought safety in exile, or buried themselves in obscurity, whence they only issued, at the peril of their lives, to console their sorrowful flocks. The Abbé Thomas, who had made himself conspicuous by his devotedness, was eagerly sought after. Two domiciliary visits had already been made at the Hôtel Blin in order to seize the good priest, and it was resolved he should not escape them the third time. In fact, they laid their plans so well that, in spite of all the precautions of the abbé's friends, they took him by surprise. It was night, and M. Thomas had gone tranquilly to bed, when the impious emissaries suddenly presented themselves. At the first alarm, he tried to get to the hiding-place prepared for him, but he had not time. He ran into the stable, and, while trying to climb into a loft, he was perceived by one

of the sans-culottes, who prevented him from drawing up the ladder by which he had ascended. "I have got him—the gallows-bird!" cried the ruffian. Mother Julia and Mademoiselle Blin meanwhile trembled for the life of the good father, and prayed fervently for his preservation. At the moment when the Republican, on the topmost round of the ladder, was about to grasp his prey, the candle (O Divine Providence!) he held fell from his hand and was extinguished. While he was stooping down to pick it up, the minister of God profited by the accident and the obscurity to leap over his back. In an instant he reached his impenetrable hiding-place, and was saved, as it were, by a miracle! The disappointed Republicans became enraged, and swore they would not go away without their refractory priest. They were obliged to give up the pursuit, however, for the Almighty guarded his servant. Nevertheless, in 1799, tired of the tumult of the city and the terrifying domiciliary visits, the Abbé Thomas, Mother Julia, and Mademoiselle Blin, all went to live in the Château de Béthancourt, six leagues from Amiens. It was hoped the pure country air would ameliorate Mother Julia's health, but this hope was not at first realized. A severe illness added to her ordinary sufferings, and Mademoiselle Blin had the small-pox. So true it is that our Lord never leaves his chosen ones without afflictions. Subsequently Mother Julia acquired

more strength, so she was able to recline on a *chaise longue*. Her power of speech also began to improve, and she profited by it to resume her favorite employment—the teaching of the Catechism. The parish of Béthancourt, having been deprived of its pastor for a long time, seemed to have quite forgotten the truths of religion and its holy practices. The Abbé Thomas devoted himself to this field of labor. He undertook the instruction of the men, visited the sick, assisted the unfortunate, and endeavored to lead all to God. Mother Julia and her companion instructed the women, and taught the children the Catechism, and how to read, write, knit, sew, etc. They tried especially to incline them to the love and service of God. The village soon changed its aspect, and they who were so devoted to its welfare saw their labors crowned with consoling success. They were frequently edified by the piety of these simple souls, carried to an extent of which they had not thought them capable. Among other instances, an old Revolutionist, whom they had the happiness of leading back to a sense of his religious obligations, was reduced to beggary as a means of support, but he found opportunities of sanctifying this sad necessity. Every day he began his rounds at the château, where his first alms was ready for him. It was noticed that, as soon as he had received it, he always hurried off in a par-

ticular direction. Father Thomas, curious to know where he went so regularly, followed him several times unperceived. He saw him stop before an old blind man, a beggar like himself, and, taking off his hat respectfully, place in his hands the alms he had just begged for himself. The good abbé asked the reason for all this. "He is an excellent old man," replied the ex-Revolutionist, "and I salute him, as I would Jesus Christ whom I see in his person. I give him the first-fruits of each day which the good God sends me, because he is more unfortunate than I. He is blind, whereas I am able to go around through the villages and seek my subsistence."

But Father Thomas's zeal was not confined within the limits of Béthancourt. He found the means of sustaining the good work he had commenced at Amiens, and to commence many others. He induced M. Louis Sellier to establish a boarding-school in the buildings occupied by the Oratorians before the Revolution, and thus prepared the way for the introduction of the fathers of the faith.

A colony of these fathers arrived in France in the year 1800, with Father Varin, their Superior-General.* This father went to Amiens the following year in the month of June. He went

*For an account of this society, see the *Life of the Rev. Father Varin*, by Father Guidée, S.J.; also, the *Life of Father Sellier*, by the same author.

to Béthancourt, St. Ouen, several times on foot, and thus our first mothers providentially met the man chosen to promote our Congregation. Possessing the zeal of an apostle, he labored with indefatigable activity for the salvation of souls. He gave retreats and missions, directed people of the world, and founded many useful establishments. As soon as he saw Mother Julia, he felt that, contrary to all appearances, she was called by God to labor for the instruction of the young. When he made known to her his impressions, the humble invalid replied: "How can this be, father?" And, indeed, at this time, though the power of speech had been restored to her, she remained partly paralyzed and subject to excessive pain.

The fire of the Revolution was now extinct, and the churches were reopened to the piety of the faithful. Private chapels were forbidden, but Monseigneur de Villaret, Bishop of Amiens, being at Béthancourt to administer confirmation, was so touched by Mother Julia's condition that he allowed M. Thomas to continue to say Mass at the château.

After laboring about four years at Béthancourt, our Lord wished to open a more extended field to the zeal of the three inmates of the château, and they returned to Amiens at the end of February, 1803. All the apartments of the Hôtel Blin being rented, they were obliged for a time

to occupy a house extremely disagreeable in every respect, which added to Mother Julia's sufferings. She continued, however, to teach the Catechism as usual. This was a comfort she could not dispense with. Wherever she was conveyed to, she assembled grown people and young children around her to speak to them of God. At the end of six months they were able to hire a more convenient dwelling, which they took possession of on the 5th of August, 1803. Father Thomas also lodged in the same house, to the great joy of those to whom he had already done so much good.

BOOK SECOND.

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF OUR CONGREGATION AT AMIENS TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSE AT NAMUR.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST CONSECRATION—FIRST RULE—MISSION AT AMIENS.

FATHER VARIN, whom Mother Julia met again at Amiens, persisted in his belief that God would be glorified through her instrumentality. It would seem as if our Lord had revealed to him his designs respecting her. Her infirm and helpless condition, which resisted every remedy, did not shake the belief of this zealous missionary. He ordered her, therefore, to commence a work, having for its object the instruction of the young, particularly the poorest and most destitute children, telling her she should endeavor to draw around her some persons of ability and good-will to aid her in this work. Mother Julia, who had passed her whole life in submission to others, did not now refuse to obey, and God, through his inspirations, sent her some assistants fitted for the Institute of which she was to be the mother. The first who joined her and Mademoiselle Blin was Mademoiselle Catharine Duchâtel, of Rheims.

The second of February, 1804, the festival of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin was signalized by the first consecration of this infant community.

Julia Billiart, Frances Blin, and Catharine Duchâtel made a vow of chastity before the Blessed Sacrament, and promised God to devote themselves to the work he had evidently given them. The great number of orphans and homeless children made by the bloody Revolution first excited their interest, but they were still more affected in witnessing the prevailing ignorance of the young respecting the principles of our holy faith. They found herein a field of labor which was the principal object of their first religious engagements. They devoted themselves to the instruction of orphans, and especially to the formation of teachers for those places where they were needed, in order to teach the poor gratuitously. As these first promises were not vows, they subsequently extended their care to children of all classes, as well as orphans; but the Sisters of Notre Dame will always regard the poor as the dearest and most essential object of their Institute, and will always cherish the wish of devoting themselves, according to the expression of their rule, to the children of the vilest localities. This special object of our Order is indicated in the temporary rule given them by the Rev. Father Varin on the above-mentioned day of the Purification. In order to draw down the more effectually the blessing of heaven on their enterprise, our tried foundresses and their pious companion consecrated themselves to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

through the Holy Heart of Mary. Their formula of consecration, composed by the Rev. Mother Julia, and in her own handwriting, has been carefully preserved. It comprises a vow to propagate the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The following is a faithful copy:

"Vive notre bon et aimable Jesus et Marie! O Jesus, my God and my King! I devote, consecrate, and give myself wholly up to thy Sacred Heart for time and for eternity. I devote and consecrate to thy Divine Heart all that I am, all I possess, and all I hope for; my liberty, my soul, with all its powers, my memory, my understanding, my will, and my imagination; my body, with all its faculties; all my intentions, all my words, all my actions, all my pains, both physical and mental, all my past merits and those I may acquire, and every moment of my life, especially my last sigh. And I bind myself by a vow, O my Jesus! to maintain and extend the devotion to thy Sacred Heart among the faithful.

"O Mary, Immaculate Virgin, my Mother and my Queen! I devote and consecrate myself in the same manner, in the same terms, and to the same extent, to thy Holy Heart, begging thee, by the ardent love for all mankind which inflames it, to accept my act of consecration, and to present it thyself to the Sacred Heart of Jesus thy Son.

I likewise bind myself by a vow to propagate the devotion to thy Holy Heart and thy Immaculate Conception.

"And I vow to renew this consecration twice a year—on the Festival of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and that of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, or during the Octave of these festivals; to make two Communions a year, on the same festivals or the days on which I renew my vow; the first in honor of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, and the second in honor of the Holy Heart of Mary and her Immaculate Conception; finally, to make on each of these two days an hour's meditation with the same intention—that is, to honor the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the most Holy and Immaculate Heart of Mary his Mother.

"It will suffice for the absolute fulfilment of this vow, in order to be exempt from sin, that during the course of the year, either in conversation or special discourses, I should, two or three times, perform some exterior act tending to maintain and propagate the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, the Holy Heart of Mary and her Immaculate Conception. If I cannot conveniently renew my vow on the above-mentioned days, I will do it, without scruple, on some other day of my own selection. I propose renewing this vow twice a day—in the morning during my thanksgiving after Holy Communion, and in the

evening before retiring to rest. I will do it briefly.

"Grant, O merciful Jesus! that I may breathe out my last sigh in thy adorable Heart. Let it be an act of pure love."

Our Lord strikingly manifested how acceptable was this entire consecration of the new family of Notre Dame to himself by the special favors he conferred on it during the same year. On the twentieth of February he sent it two new members of sterling qualities, with a devotedness not to be daunted by any of the difficulties incident to all new foundations, and from which Mother Julia did not desire hers to be exempted. The first was Mademoiselle Victoria Leleu, who afterwards took the name of Sister Anastasia. She was a native of Chépy (a village of Picardy), and about twenty-four years of age. The other was Justine Garçon, a native of the same village, who was called, in the religious life, Sister St. John. In the following month of March, Genevieve Gosselin, of Béthancourt, was admitted into the Congregation.

The Rev. Father Varin had just organized a body of missionaries sufficiently numerous to give general missions in the large cities. The excellent Father Thomas belonged to it, and they commenced their career by a mission at Tours, which was very successful. The second city

which had the happiness of participating in their holy exercises was Amiens, where they were not less successful. The audience at the cathedral alone amounted to ten thousand persons. Our sisters assiduously attended the mission, which was given in all the parishes at once. Mother Julia herself went frequently in a sedan-chair, and the fathers of the faith profited by her zeal in religious instruction. Father Sellier relates that she and her spiritual children were charged with the instruction of the women of the lower classes, who were generally ignorant of the first principles of religion, and with preparing them for the reception of the sacraments. In this apostolic work, she displayed all the activity of which she was capable, and filled the office of a true missionary. Her whole time, and that of her children, was employed in repeating the morning and evening prayers, the principal mysteries of religion, the commandments of God, etc., to the classes that succeeded one another, in one of the rooms belonging to the infant community.

CHAPTER II.

THE CURE OF MOTHER JULIA — HER RETREAT.

MOTHER JULIA had not ceased suffering from physical pains of various kinds for thirty years, twenty-two of which she had been confined to her couch by paralysis. Nevertheless, she was never heard to complain, or manifest any desire to be released from this state of suffering, even under the pretext of laboring in the cause she loved so much. Her heart may be said to have been anchored to the Divine Will. The good pleasure of God was the only desire of her heart and her soul. It would have been difficult, then, to induce her to pray for recovery from her painful condition. But the moment marked by God had arrived when he wished her to labor actively for his glory.

The change in her condition which we are about to relate was wrought by means of Father Enfantin, one of the missionaries, a man of faith and zeal who frequented the rooms of his colleague Father Thomas. He was inspired to beg the Sacred Heart of Jesus for the cure of our Rev. Mother. On the Monday in the Octave of Corpus Christi, he told the invalid he was making a No-

vena for some one, and wished her to unite her prayers to his, which she did with all the fervor of her soul, without asking or receiving any other explanation. Towards evening, on the eighth of June, 1804, the Festival of the Sacred Heart, and the fifth day of the Novena, Father Enfantin again visited Mother Julia. She was at that moment alone in the garden. Accosting her, he said: "Mother, if you have any faith, take one step in honor of the Heart of Jesus." Mother Julia rose and took this step—the first for twenty-two years. "Now take another," added the father, and she obeyed. "And another," which was likewise done. "Very well," said the man of God. "Now sit down." She sat down, declaring, however, that she could walk further. But Father Enfantin went away, expressly forbidding her to mention what had occurred. Mother Julia remained motionless for some time, as if lost in sentiments of gratitude; then, to conceal the favor that had been conferred on her, she returned to her room, which was on the ground and accessible from the garden, in her usual manner, moving herself along by means of her chair. Her companions, who were in the upper part of the house, had seen nothing that occurred, for the good Mother, in spite of her infirmity, was accustomed to retire to rest without assistance by edging from the chair to the bed, which had been made of the same height for that reason. The next morning,

she went to Mass, ascending the stairs in her usual manner, by sitting down and hoisting herself from one stair to another by means of her hands. After Mass she went into the room adjoining the chapel to communicate to Father Thomas what had happened, having permission to do so. When he saw her walk, he was filled with astonishment, and affected to tears. The remainder of the day and the two following days, Mother Julia kept up an appearance of infirmity before others, but sometimes walked about when no one was with her. On Sunday, she went in her chair to the street door, to see the procession of the Blessed Sacrament. She certainly might have joined it, but had not been directed to do so. One of the days following her cure, the good Father Thomas, whether doubtful or not, appeared to be incredulous respecting it. "But, mother, I do not know what all this means," said he. "I do not see you walk. The works of God are perfect. If he had really cured you, you would continue to walk." "Father," replied Mother Julia, "I assure you that, while you are talking, I have a feeling within me which keeps growing stronger. Do you wish me to go up-stairs in your presence?" "Yes," answered the father. Mother Julia immediately ascended the stairs with the greatest ease. At last, after four days, she was allowed to reveal to the community the favor God had wrought. On Tuesday, the twelfth of June, the sisters, after their

thanksgiving for the Holy Communion, went down to the refectory to breakfast, leaving Mother Julia to prolong her devotions. The pupils were in a small room next the refectory. They heard an unknown step, but a firm one, overhead, which naturally excited their curiosity. One of the youngest suddenly exclaimed from her post of observation: "See the mother coming downstairs!" The sisters heard this exclamation. "But I do not know the cause of our stupidity," says our dear Mother St. Joseph in her account of the occurrence. "We did not move a step to meet her." Mother Julia came in, only uttering the words, *Te Deum.* The sisters involuntarily threw themselves on their knees, and the tears they shed were their first acts of thanksgiving. They returned immediately to the chapel to continue the hymn their mother had just commenced. This cure made a profound impression on all who knew the circumstances, not only at Amiens, but in many other cities. It increased the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus. This signal favor was attributed to Mother Julia's lively faith and to the simplicity of her obedience, as well as to the design of God to make use of her for the promotion of his glory.

Immediately after her cure, Mother Julia began a retreat of ten days to thank God, and prepare for new efforts in his service. Her director was the same Father Enfantin through whose means

she had been cured. His manner of directing was so extraordinary that I cannot refrain from speaking of it.

Father Enfantin was a man full of zeal and ardor. He was called to the ecclesiastical state in the very height of the Revolution. He was in the prime of life. He did not shrink from fighting the battles of the Lord; but, though it was during the Reign of Terror, immediately commenced his theological studies, and soon received holy orders. He became, through the influences of the Holy Spirit, a missionary powerful in word and deed. He communicated to others the strength of his own convictions, and impressed them by his vigorous style of speaking. We might consider him rather lavish of his vehemence and energy towards our mother, if we did not know that the Lord makes use of everything for the spiritual advancement of his elect. She had just recovered the use of her limbs, but her stomach was still delicate. She was unable to eat beans or salad, or drink pure cold water. Father Enfantin began by restricting her to the use of cold water, sometimes mingling ashes with it. Then he made her eat great quantities of beans, salad, etc. Mother Julia alone could tell all she suffered from this *régime;* nevertheless, she followed it courageously and without complaining. From time to time he made her take her meals kneeling in the refectory before all the

sisters, and there, in a half-playful, half-contemptuous manner, he would unceremoniously throw a glass of cold water in her face, and use the strongest, most contemptuous, and most severe expressions in addressing her. And he would make a terrific scene for some trivial or imaginary fault, giving her such looks as confounded the sisters, though they had been made aware of his intentions; for in Mother Julia's absence he spoke of her with esteem and respect, and made it evident that his procedure was only for the purpose of proving her, and for her advance in perfection. For a whole year this humble mother was subjected to this extraordinary director, after which he was sent to another place. During Mother Julia's retreat, already mentioned, Father Enfantin surpassed himself. He did not allow her a moment of relaxation, but kept her constantly at prayer or some other exercise, or performing some penance. He confined her in the garret, and thence could be heard his harsh words to her; for, if he treated her with rigor before the community, he went still further in private. We quote the very words of Mother St. Joseph, who witnessed all I have just related. She says: "I will not repeat the ignoble terms he used, and I could not describe the air and tone with which they were accompanied. I am persuaded that Mother Julia only told me a small part of his treatment. She took

all these things as coming from God, and in a spirit of penance. She did justice to the intentions and zeal of this father. He told me more than once how much he esteemed Mother Julia, and that to speak to her so authoritatively and harshly required such an effort as to make him actually tremble. He also declared that our good mother had received great and rare graces from God."

CHAPTER III.

MISSIONS AT VALERY-SUR-SOMME AND ABBEVILLE.

THE missionaries were so pleased with Mother Julia's labors at Amiens, and the blessing that accompanied them, that they invited her to St. Valery, where they were to give a mission, and afterwards to Abbeville. In these two towns she did not spare herself any more than she had done at Amiens, and she was equally successful. The miracle wrought in her behalf contributed not a little to excite public veneration, and her active charity completed the conquest of every heart. She set out for these missions on the 14th of June, at the end of her retreat, taking Sister Victoria Leleu with her. She knew she could trust everything at home to Mother Blin, and she encouraged the community by frequent letters which are a complete index to her soul. We quote some extracts from them:

"I. M. J.

"JUNE 15, 1804.

"May the holy name of the Lord be for ever praised and blessed for all his mercies! my very dear child. We arrived at St. Valery at mid-

night; a little late, as you see. Everybody was in bed, but the good God provided for us. We found some excellent people who lodged us, some very excellent people. The weather has been extremely warm. I was very warm in the carriage, but as the good God sends the heat and cold, may his holy name be blessed!

"To-day I had the pleasure of hearing Mass in a church for the first time for twenty-three years. This seemed so good. I hope you will thank God for me. I had the happiness of receiving my God in the church. What a favor our kind Saviour has granted me! I must tell you that I go from the hotel to the church very easily, though it is far enough off. The good God gives me great courage, for my feet suffered so from heat in the carriage that they are both swollen, so when I walk on the hard pavements of St. Valery, it seems as if I were walking on thorns. . . .

"I have a room and a garden in which I can hear the Catechism. May the name of the Lord be praised and blessed for everything! I am sure, my dear good children, that you earnestly pray for me. I have this sweet hope. We are still united in God. You regret a little, do you not, the absence of your poor mother? This is natural, but I assure you I behold you all in God, in the adorable heart of our Lord. How earnestly I beg he may find a worthy place in your hearts!"

Mother Julia was perfectly cured of her paralysis, but long disuse of her feet made them excessively delicate, as we have just seen. Her courage had enabled her to surmount this difficulty, when it pleased God to send her another. It happened that, while walking in the street with Mademoiselle Leleu, a carter, close at hand, suddenly struck his horses, causing them to spring to one side. Mother Julia, in her haste to avoid collision, sprained her foot, which became very much swollen, so that she could only get about with difficulty for several days. The missionaries, seeing her nearly unable to walk, without knowing the cause, began to doubt the permanency of her cure. Julia, somewhat afflicted, succeeded in getting into a church, where she remained several hours engaged in prayer, begging Almighty God to aid her. And he was not deaf to the voice of his handmaid. She left the church perfectly relieved of her trouble. "I heard of it," says our good Mother St. Joseph, "from a witness on the spot,* and she herself acknowledged it long after the event."

On the 23d of June, Mother Julia again wrote:

"I cannot forget you, my dear children, though I have no leisure. May the holy name of the

* Father Varin.

Lord be blessed for everything! The mission of St. Valery is succeeding very well. The devil, of course, places every possible obstacle in the way. Our good fathers are pleased, and especially the curé. There are some who had not been to confession for thirty-six years.

"I doubt not you are doing your best to keep our little rule. I earnestly beg the good God to guide you by his Holy Spirit. I pray with all my heart for my dear family in God. Ah, my dear children, we must have courage in these times. We need noble hearts that earnestly seek the greater glory of God. Beg our Lord to bestow this grace on me. . . .

"I close my letter to assist a man in learning the Apostles' Creed. He is nearly seventy years old, and has not made his first Communion. He has the best will in the world. Many regards to the dear little Mother Barat. I am glad she goes to see you and takes the air in our garden.

"J. B."

"I. M. J.

"July 9.

"I can hear all my dear children complaining: 'Our mother neglects us. She does not write us a single word.' Ah, do not say that, my dear children, for here I am stealing a moment from my dinner to write you a line. It does not take me longer to dine here than during the mission at Amiens. May the name of the Lord be blessed

and praised for everything! What I can tell you, my dear children, is that the good God is still very good! You have, doubtless, heard that I was at Abbeville to see and consult the good Father Varin. My journey was very satisfactory, though I got a good jolting in our little vehicle, and we were out in the rain. . . . It is all right! I saw some sisters there who recognized me, and were greatly surprised to see me trotting about so. Thanks to the Lord, my foot is getting better. Every evening it is very much swollen, but the good God makes it go when it is necessary. May his holy name be blessed for everything! Let us love him; let us love him! Then everything will seem right. I hope I shall find everybody loving and serving this good God.

"Pray for me, my dear children, all of you. I do not yet know how long I shall remain there. Beg earnestly that it may be for the greater glory of God, and that I may remain as long as he sees fit. I give myself up to his guidance, as I ought. M. de Clauzel tells me to remain at Abbeville: he has not fixed the time.

"I leave you with God, hoping to embrace you tenderly in our Lord. J. B."

"July 18.

"We arrived at Abbeville on Monday, at two o'clock in the afternoon. We were not cold on the way, I assure you. We set out at ten

o'clock in the morning, leaving the whole town in tears of regret at the departure of our good fathers. It was truly affecting to see that crowd with tears in their eyes. Everybody was afflicted. Let us offer up suitable thanksgivings to the Lord for having permitted this mission. Oh! how many souls would have remained in a state of deadly sin without this assistance! . . .

"I would like for you to offer for me, with the permission of your confessor, your first Communion after the reception of my letter, for I do not know how to thank the good God for the benefits he daily bestows on me."

"AUGUST 2.

"Although I am only a useless servant, and do but little for his greater glory, I assure you, nevertheless, that the days pass with inexpressible rapidity. The good people of Abbeville leave me no time for *ennui.* I do not know whom to listen to first about all sorts of things. Rosaries and books are to be given to those who wish for them. I am obliged to be systematic, or I should not have a moment of relaxation. . . . I bless God that everything is going on well in the community. All that I ask of him is, that you really love him with all your hearts. Listen: when we love the good God, we do everything right, right! but when we do not love him, ah! whatever ta-

lents, whatever intellect we possess, we do nothing available for heaven!

"I find nothing to say to you, my dear children, but what the beloved disciple said: Love one another for the love of God. And God, oh! love him above all things. O good God, I shall find heaven again at my return to our little community! What a joy to my heart! I could not express the pleasure I should feel to find myself once more in your midst. The good God is waiting for me to make my meditation. Do not take it amiss, my dear children, if I leave you to go with him—with this good Master. Oh! how sweet it is to love him—to serve him! How much he merits it. O my God: why are not our hearts burning with love for so kind a Father! He knows how truly I love you in him. Pray to him for your poor vile mother."

The great enemy of souls could not behold the benefit derived from these spiritual exercises without anger. Immediately after the return of the fathers to Amiens, the civil authority notified them to leave the department, and the missions were necessarily suspended. Mother Julia profited by this season of repose to infuse more and more into her community the religious spirit and apostolic zeal that animated herself. She had returned home some days before the Assumption,

after an absence of about two months. This first separation had been painful to the young congregation. The sisters were happy to behold their mother again, and to find her, notwithstanding her continued labors, enjoying better health than when she left home.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW RULE — DEATH OF THE FIRST ORPHAN — FIRST VOWS—FIRST JOURNEY TO FLANDERS.

THE Rev. Father Varin chose the Festival of the Visitation, 1805, on which to give to the Sisters of Notre Dame a more extended rule for the purpose of trial. It proved to be adapted to their wants, and its principal points have been retained in the actual rule and constitutions, which, collected and arranged by our dear Mother St. Joseph, received the approval of Pope Gregory XVI.

On the 18th of August, the Sunday in the Octave of the Assumption, they celebrated for the first time the Festival of the Holy Heart of Mary. The Curé of the Cathedral of Amiens offered up the Holy Sacrifice, and preached a discourse on the happiness of the religious life, which filled the community with great consolation and prepared the first members of our Institute to consummate their sacrifice.

The next day God sent them a new object of charity. They received a young orphan, between twelve and thirteen years of age, who had been discharged from the General Hospital, but appeared to have delicate lungs. She was very ignorant,

and had many of the defects resulting from a bad education. But her soul was simple and innocent, and she had a decided taste for religious instruction which excited the interest of her teachers. Little Madeleine was so pleased to hear the Catechism read that she begged Mother Blin to explain it to her. Her health grew worse daily. Father Varin wished them to prepare her as soon as possible for her first Communion. This excellent Father seemed to be a messenger of grace to the poor sick child. Her comprehension of the truths of salvation suddenly developed, and her sentiments were a source of edification to the household. She was allowed, by the permission of the ecclesiastical superiors, to make her first Communion in the chapel, and she had the happiness of receiving the Holy Eucharist three times before her death. The last time, she suffered so during Mass that she did nothing but scream and cry. Father Varin was not willing to have her sent out, and his charity was rewarded; for, at the moment of Holy Communion, the child's face lit up with a smile, and she made her thanksgiving quietly. From this time she daily failed. She did not fear death; on the contrary, she longed for it and only spoke of the happiness of heaven. "Oh!" said she to her worthy instructress, "when shall I go to heaven to see the child Jesus and the Blessed Virgin you have told me about?" A quarter of an hour

before breathing her last, she was silent. "I am praying to God," said she suddenly, and made a sign for the crucifix, which she lovingly kissed several times, and then expired. "This death was a great consolation to us," says our dear Mother St. Joseph. It was the first offering of the community to heaven, and they felt they had acquired another advocate before God.

On St. Theresa's day our two foundresses and the two first members of the Institute, Victoria Leleu and Justine Garçon, made their religious vows in the presence of the Rev. Father Varin, to whom they promised obedience. They had made a sufficiently long trial of the state of life they wished to embrace, and their first vows were perpetual, as we shall see by the following formula:

"I, Victoria Anastasia Leleu, promise to almighty God, before the Blessed Virgin his mother, and all the hosts of heaven, and in your presence, father, perpetual poverty, chastity, and obedience, and, comformably to this obedience, a particular care for the instruction of children. All this according to the constitutions, conditions, and intentions that have been manifested to me. At Amiens, in the Chapel of the Orphan's House, October 15, 1805."

A month previous, the community had a great sacrifice to make. The missions of the fathers of the faith, suspended for a time, were resumed with

success, and the Rev. Father Thomas was obliged to leave Amiens to aid the other missionaries in evangelizing the south of France. During his ten years' residence with our mothers, he did them a great deal of good, and rendered them great service. When our congregation was founded, he took great pains to consolidate the work. A doctor of the Sorbonne and very learned, he carried his devotedness so far as to spend all his leisure time in instructing the sisters in those branches which they wished to teach. But he especially aided them in the explanation of the Catechism and the profound study of the Christian Doctrine. The zeal and enlightened views of so good a religious were a valuable resource for our foundress, but she calmly resigned herself to his loss, in view of God's will and the great good he was going to effect.

Several new members were now added to the family of Notre Dame, and the following year, on the 27th of March, the eve of the Compassion of the Blessed Virgin, four of these novices were admitted to the profession. The first professed likewise renewed their vows at the same time, as has been our practice ever since. This accession to their number was a visible proof of God's blessing, and of his wish to extend their labors to other places. The Rev. Father Leblanc, Superior of the Fathers of the Faith at Amiens, was of this opinion. Father Varin, their Superior-General,

who had a stopping-place at Paris in which to pass the short intervals from his apostolic labors, had confided to Father Leblanc the particular direction of the affairs of our congregation. The latter had a certain care over the Petit-Séminaire of Roulens, which he had opened the preceding year, and which owed its foundation to Monseigneur Fallot de Beaumont, Bishop of Ghent. In one of the frequent journeys which he made to Flanders for the benefit of his society, Father Leblanc invited Mother Julia to accompany him, that he might present her to the Bishop of Ghent, foreseeing the good that might result from this step. Our foundress, participating in this hope, readily consented; but the journey was strongly opposed by the new confessor of the house, a distinguished ecclesiastic, who was liked by the bishop, but, instead of following the course of Father Thomas, wished to force his own private views, at all hazards, upon the new Institute. This opposition was only the first link of a long chain of annoyances which God made use of for the accomplishment of his designs. On this occasion the difficulties were removed, and the two travellers went to Ghent in June, 1806. They were cordially received by Monseigneur de Beaumont, who expressed to Mother Julia a great desire of having in his diocese an establishment similar to hers at Amiens. In order to realize this project, our mother saw it would be necessary to

have sisters who understood the Flemish language. She, therefore, wished to take back to Amiens some Flemish postulants, that they might become imbued with the spirit of her Institute. It was also indispensable that they should acquire the French language, and other branches of knowledge, to fit them for the instruction of the young, and the formation of good school-mistresses suitable for the country in which they were greatly needed. Mother Julia, who sought God alone in all things, went, as usual, straight to the point. She simply made known her wants to the good bishop, who promised to procure her some postulants with a vocation to this work. Meanwhile, she returned to Amiens, rejoicing in the hope of laboring some day in Flanders for the benefit of the rising generation and the glory of Almighty God.

CHAPTER V.

HOUSE IN THE FAUBOURG NOYON—COMMENCEMENT OF SCHOOLS — AFFAIRS OF THE COMMUNITY — JOURNEYS TO FLANDERS.

THE house at Amiens was now too small to contain the religious community which was constantly increasing. For want of room they had not been able to open a regular school for day scholars, with the exception of Mother Julia's classes in the Catechism. The community now comprised eighteen sisters and only four boarders. They therefore hired a larger house in the Faubourg Noyon. It was painful to the sisters, however, to leave the cradle of their order where they had received so many blessings. So many holy remembrances were connected with the spot, the devoted care of their wise founders, the cure of their mother, and their first vows.

Madame de Fransu, a very pious lady and a life-long friend of Mother Blin's, was very much attached to our community, and had long wished to have rooms in the house. She was desirous of aiding the establishment, and enjoying the privileges of residing under the same roof with our Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament. This favor

was now accorded her, and she took possession of a small apartment in the Faubourg Noyon.

The sisters of Notre Dame increased so rapidly in their new quarters that, in less than a year, there were thirty, besides the five that had been sent to St. Nicholas, and two to Mont Didier; of whom we shall soon speak. It is proper to remark here that, at the commencement of this work, God only called those who were in limited circumstances. Mother Blin constituted the only exception. "Without doubt," says she, with the humility that characterized her whole life, "it was by God's great views of mercy towards me that he deigned to admit me among his servants and to accept my offering." God had given Mother Julia such a capacity for business that we never got into debt, which, adds Mother St. Joseph, religious houses should carefully guard against, through conscientious motives and the inconveniences that result from it. The narrow circumstances of the community did not at all influence our foundresses in accepting or rejecting a subject. They were only guided on this point by supernatural motives, seeking first the kingdom of God and his justice, certain that all other things would be added thereto. "It has been our experience," says Mother St. Joseph, "that a spirit of disinterestedness, and fidelity to the rule, is a much better resource for a religious community, as to the necessaries of life, than all the treasures of

the world, because then Divine Providence is pledged to supply its wants. A spirit of poverty and mortification makes up for want of abundance, and, when system is joined to these virtues, a little goes a good way." And how could these sisters help loving religious poverty! They had been taught to regard it as their mother, as the protectress and nurse of their congregation, as the rampart of all the virtues that should adorn a religious house, and, above all, they had before them two perfect models in their foundresses. Mother Julia had from her very youth found her delight in a state of poverty, suffering, and abjection, and now she held up with a firm hand this sacred banner of our Saviour before her children. The most of the sisters slept on straw in the alcoves of the garret. They had to breakfast on dry bread. Their dinner consisted of soup and a dish of vegetables; meat was only indulged in on Sundays. The Vicomtesse de Gézaincourt, accustomed to all the luxuries of the rich, joyfully embraced this manner of life. From the moment of her religious consecration, she had promised our Lord to follow him in his poverty: "I will live poor. I will embrace lovingly the poverty of Jesus Christ, that I may merit to be the servant and mother of his poor." Now she carried this fundamental virtue to heroism. In the same streets of Amiens that she had once traversed with a brilliant equipage, she might now be seen, poorly clad, carrying, with

her worthy companion, the provisions she had purchased for the community.

As soon as our sisters were established in the Faubourg Noyon, they opened a free school for poor children. On this occasion, Mother Julia tested the obedience and simplicity of two young persons of the house—a novice and a boarder who wished to join the community. She sent them into the neighboring streets, bell in hand, to announce the opening of the school. Sister Clotilda, going in one direction, properly accomplished her task. The other lost the tongue of her bell in the filth, but, invoking her good angel, she succeeded in finding it again. Having collected around her a group of girls, she said to them with admirable simplicity: "You are notified that the sisters of Notre Dame have just opened a free school for girls. Go and inform your parents of it." Many of the latter had also heard the announcement of the obedient pupil. But she noticed that one miserable-looking door did not open at the sound of her bell, and she did not wish to return without entirely accomplishing her duty. She knocked at the hut, but no one appeared. Growing bolder, she pushed the door partly open, but only to behold a scene of extreme wretchedness. An old man, lying on a poor truckle-bed, was being waited upon by a woman who was evidently suffering, and the almost naked children were ashamed to appear. Touched with compassion,

she addressed some words of consolation to the unfortunate family, and retired, promising them assistance on the part of the superiors. They went to the aid of this poor household. The girls were clothed and made ready to join sixty of their companions, who, on the very first day, responded to the charitable announcement. The school then was filled, according to the wish of the teachers, with indigent pupils, upon whom they could lavish all their religious tenderness, and the vocation of the Sisters of Notre Dame was defined more clearly every day.

On the 28th of August, the foundress set out anew for Flanders, to procure the postulants ready for her. One of them, a native of Ghent, and the only one that knew any French, has left some interesting memoranda respecting her first interview and journey with Mother Julia. It may give pleasure to have the simple account of the worthy sister, Mary Stenhault. She says:

"My confessor, knowing I was solicitous of entering a religious house, spoke to me about Mother Julia's Institute at Amiens. As I was desirous, in consecrating myself to God, of going to a distance from my native city, I soon decided upon the house my director had proposed. According to his advice, having obtained the consent of my parents, I repaired to the Bishop of

Ghent to obtain admission. He asked me several questions, and did not conceal from me the difficulties and trials that generally accompany the beginning of a new institute. Seeing that nothing shook my firmness, he received me as his first child, and told me it would be necessary to wait till some others presented themselves, when Mother Julia would come to get us. Several weeks passed, and I was tired of the delay. Monseigneur's secretary told me that the young persons who had presented themselves had not been found suitable for the work, and that I alone had been admitted. . . . At last it was announced to me that Mother Julia had arrived, and desired to see me at the bishop's. I went there at once. Received first by monseigneur himself, it was only in his presence that I held any conversation, on that day, with our foundress, but from this first interview I conceived for her a great affection and a sincere esteem. I was desirous of introducing her to my parents; she acceded to my request, and in passing the parish church she entered it. One of my sisters, whom she did not know at all, happened to be there, and was directly before our mother. She came out with us, and made her acquaintance on the way. Mother Julia told her she would some day become her child. And when alone with her, she told me that God had enlightened her respecting this young person. My sister was extremely

affected by the conversation she had with our dear Mother Julia. The sight of our foundress did not produce less effect upon my own mother, who regarded her as another St. Theresa; and when Mother Julian inquired if it was with her full consent that I left her, she replied: 'I have so much confidence in you, that I give you not only my oldest daughter, but my three youngest, if God deigns to call them to the religious life. This happiness has been refused me: I pray God to grant it to my children.'

"Julia admired this spirit of faith, amounting to heroism, in a lady of the world. She loved afterwards to recall the remembrance of it to her daughters;* but in making this eulogium [adds Sister Mary] our mother did not say that God had given her the faculty of moving hearts and winning them to the divine cause. When people had any intercourse with her, they could not resist loving her and confiding in her."

The other aspirants who had been promised Mother Julia were not from Ghent. The Rev. Father de Hasque, belonging to the Petit-Séminaire of Roulers, had procured two for her. While waiting for them to join her, she wrote the community the following letter, which re-

* Two of her youngest daughters came successively to join the oldest: Sister Gertrude and Sister Theresa.

veals so well the habitual sentiments of her heart:

SEPT. 1, 1806.

. . . . . .

"See how man proposes, but God will dispose of all for his greater glory. I could not decide to await the reply of the good gentleman at Roulers (M. De Hasque) before writing you a few words; that would be too great a trial of my maternal affection in God. I assure you all, my dear good children, that all your hearts are constantly in mine. But what am I saying? . . . No, no; I would only have them all to deposit them for ever in the divine and adorable heart of our dear Lord. Here, my good Jesus, are all the hearts of my dear sisters. Oh! yes, they are worth much more than mine, my sweet Saviour; but mine, hidden among them, will not be refused, I trust. O my good sisters! how happy we are to wish to belong to God with all our hearts! If you knew—if you knew how happy we are! I cannot refrain from tears while writing you, in seeing my God so little known, so little loved. It is not that I have no reason to bless the Lord in the house where I am, for there is much piety here; but I recall all I heard on the road. Ah, ah! my dear good children, abandon your hearts to the operations of God's grace. Manifest your greatness of soul in forgetting yourselves to think only of the interests of God alone. . . . Let

us endeavor to prepare our hearts to procure all the glory he expects of us in particular. Above all things, let us think only of gaining souls to our good Jesus. . . . Ah! what do not the lovers of the world do every day to induce others to imitate them! And we, we do nothing for our good Jesus, our sweetest Master and Lord! . . . Come, you shall have no account of my journey. I look upon such details as trifles in comparison with speaking of the divine Master whom we have the happiness of serving. Pray a great deal for me. I strongly desire to return to you better. It seems to me that I have great need of your charity to be endured, with all the faults you must observe in me; but your faith, your charity, makes you only behold the good God in the vile instrument which the divine goodness is willing to make use of. Conceal me entirely, I beg of you, in that sweet and loving heart. Be fully assured that there is not a single one of you that I do not confide to it a thousand, thousand times a day. I will give you more details another time, if I can—that is, if I do not arrive before the end of the week. But everything is uncertain. God wishes that I should go about like one who is blind; that pleases him. Well, then, it should please me also." . . .

On account of the delay of the letters from Roulers, Mother Julia was obliged to go there

and to some other places. In passing through Courtrai, she thought of leaving her young companion at Madame Goethals-Vercruysse's, who always gave her an affectionate welcome. But she wished first to have the assent of this lady, which gave her the opportunity of testing the abnegation and blind obedience of the future Sister Mary, who thus relates the occurrence: "She made me sit down to wait for her near the stall of a good fruit-woman, from whom she bought some pears for me to eat with the bread she took from her bag. It was my first humiliation to eat thus in the street. I imagined that, among the passers-by, there might be some persons from Ghent góing to the fair at Courtrai, as, indeed, it happened the next day. I was delighted to see Mother Julia again. We took our packages under our arms, and walked to our lodging-place. We were cordially received by M. Goethals and his wife, who were ready to participate in every good work, and who were distinguished for their enlightened and sincere piety. The next day our mother accompanied me to High Mass, and in the street she was more than once insulted by the boys on account of her singular travelling costume. They called her a black witch, fortune-teller, etc. Our mother had these names translated into French, and laughed over them heartily. As for me, I was humiliated to such a degree that, going into the

church, I allowed her to go in first, and I knelt down at a distance. Our mother did not perceive it till she was going out. She questioned me, and I acknowledged my pride. She was pleased with my sincerity, and gave me some advice on humility that increased still more my esteem for her, and I was less weak in the other trials that awaited me."

Mother Julia left Mademoiselle Stenhault at Courtrai to go after the two postulants at Roulers. When she returned with them to Madame Goethals, this lady presented her a fourth—a teacher, who had been undecided about becoming a religious, but who had no sooner spoken to Mother Julia than she left all things to obey the heavenly call, and became, in the end, an excellent sister.

Mother Julia then left Courtrai, having five aspirants, four of whom were Flemish, and one from Liège. She profited by the journey to instruct her new children. "We were, during this journey," said they afterwards, "like the disciples with our Lord. Our dear mother instructed us in many things, and satisfied our curiosity respecting the congregation with prudence and sweetness. At last we arrived in the midst of the community, who were happy to see their superior again, after an absence of three weeks, and thankful to God for the recruits she had obtained."

Their coming from Flanders was a proof that God wished the Sisters of Notre Dame to extend their devotedness in that direction. The congregation had just received the approval of the Imperial Government by a decree signed at the palace of St. Cloud on the 19th of June, 1806. This young tree, so full of vigor, was now about to put forth some branches. In less than a year Mother Julia made four foundations—two in France and two in Belgium.

CHAPTER VI.

FOUNDATION AT ST. NICHOLAS — RELIGIOUS COSTUME — FOUNDATION AT MONT DIDIER — FIRST JOURNEY TO NAMUR.

BOUT two months after the return of the foundress, the Bishop of Ghent informed her that the administrators of the hospices of the town of St. Nicholas wished to form a religious establishment for the instruction of young girls, and it seemed to him suitable for her to confer with them in person. She therefore left home on the 13th of November, and these gentlemen presented her a house belonging to the hospices. It was sufficiently spacious. There was a court and a garden, three fine school-rooms, dormitories, and everything so well arranged for her object that no change was necessary. Unfortunately, there was one objection that counteracted all the other advantages. The house was so damp that water often ran down the walls. But hoping the administrators would remedy this great objection, Mother Julia accepted the establishment. Everything arranged, she returned to Amiens, promising to bring the new colony in ten or twelve days. They passed this short time

in preparing the sisters chosen for this first mission. It was on this occasion that the sisters of Notre Dame assumed for the first time their religious costume. They had black woollen dresses of a common material, large cloaks which nearly reached the ground, a black woollen coif, the pattern of which our mother had brought from Flanders, and *guimpes* of white linen.

Mother Julia left Amiens on the day after the Immaculate Conception, which, in the year 1806, fell on a Monday. The whole community had, on the eve of departure, ardently implored the blessing of Heaven on those who were about to leave, and upon all the houses they would subsequently found. They placed this first colony under the protection of the spotless Virgin, to whom our foundress had a particular devotion. When they bade each other farewell towards evening, the sisters of Amiens prostrated themselves before the missionaries and lovingly kissed their feet. They were leaving all they held dearest to carry the only true riches to poor abandoned children.

Mother Julia had chosen two French sisters for St. Nicholas, and to them added Marie Stenhault, known by the name of Sister Mary, on account of her knowledge of the Flemish language.

"Our worthy mother," says one of them, "was very cheerful. She talked of divine things with unction and simplicity, and endeavored to im-

prove the time by advice on the spiritual life." Arrived in Ghent, the reverend mother begged the bishop to bless the religious habits prepared for the sisters of St. Nicholas. He willingly acceded to this request, and after the ceremony they retired to the next room to put them on. This was on Sunday, the 15th of December, and the Octave of the Immaculate Conception. The extreme simplicity of the ceremony at this first assuming of the religious habit has always been regarded as our model on similar occasions. It was not the less a source of grace and divine consolation. This costume was precisely like the one now worn, with exception of the veil. One of the sisters, giving an account of their journey to St. Nicholas, says: "We achieved the journey, and were kindly and joyfully received by the dean. After a repast, of which the administrators partook with us, we were conducted to our future abode. The rent of the house, and the use of all the furniture and utensils in it, were given us gratuitously while we remained at St. Nicholas. From the very first we received poor children and commenced the list, but the schools were not open till several weeks later. The mother-general had at first decided that all the day-scholars should be taught gratuitously, but she was obliged to yield to representations on this point. She then allowed us to receive day-scholars who paid for their tuition. They soon be-

came very numerous, and we had to unite their classes with those of the boarders, who were few in number. Several, who had intended placing their children in the new institution, having observed the dampness of the house, thought it prudent to place them elsewhere. Before leaving, Mother Julia represented its unhealthiness to the administrators, and begged them to obviate the humidity. Meanwhile the day-schools were opened, as we learn by the following letter from the foundress:

"I. M. J.

"May our good Jesus dwell for ever in our hearts, and, if possible, in the hearts of all!

"DECEMBER 16, 1806.

"Oh! yes, may our sweet Jesus dwell for ever in our hearts, my dearest children! You prayed earnestly for us, I am sure, during our journey, for the Divine Goodness favored us with several little accidents. . . . Our carriage broke down twice; the axle-tree and braces broke short off, as if they were made of glass. But God, like a good Father, preserved us all through his infinite mercy. Let us thank him most heartily. How good the good God is! Oh! yes, let us declare it with all our hearts.

"We arrived on Saturday noon at St. Nicholas. It is now Monday. You see, my dear children, that I do not forget you. All day I have been

trying to find a few moments in which to write you the sentiments of my heart—to unite with you in saying how good the good God is. Oh! yes, yes, why cannot we make ourselves heard throughout the world?

"We had the pleasure of receiving the habit from the bishop. He had the kindness to receive us all cordially. Our sisters have been welcomed everywhere. They are all three very reasonable, and their wearing the habit pleases every one. I could not now give you any details respecting the school, which is to commence to-morrow, please God. It will open with the Mass of the Holy Ghost, preceded by the Veni Creator. It has been announced twice at the church. I insisted upon its being stated publicly that the poor school would be free. I am very firm on this point."

"TUESDAY.

"I must inform you that we had a great feast to-day in our school. There were ninety children at table. We gave them tea and little cakes that cost a sou apiece. The dean and administrators took pleasure in looking at this great family. The children had recreation all day. Everybody was very much pleased. We celebrated the opening with Mass solemnly sung. Everything will succeed well, I hope, through the grace of God. If there were no crosses in all this, I should not hope for success, but as the good God

never leaves his dear children without them, they are proofs that everything will happen for the greater glory of God. Vive Jésus!" . . .

Mother Julia was obliged to spend New Year's Day away from her family—a day so delightful in a religious house, and which displays the strength of the bonds of charity in Jesus Christ; but an earnest letter partly atoned for her absence:

"I must return all your kind wishes that I may see many new-years. Ah! I have need of them to repair all those in which I have been so unfaithful to the good God! . . .

"Oh! yes, my dear good children, my wishes for you are according to the heart of our good Jesus—that you all may become the faithful servants of the Lord to whom we are wholly consecrated, body, soul, and mind. Our whole conduct should show forth Jesus. O my good children! how sweet it is to live dying every moment to ourselves, that the spirit of Jesus alone may live in us!

"The life of our blessed Saviour in us requires that we should become like him—mild, patient, charitable towards one another, and supporting each other. O beautiful life of the good Jesus in our hearts! He wishes to fill those of my dear children. Vive Jésus!" . . .

During our mother's stay in Flanders, a priest had requested the community at Amiens to send some sisters to Mont Didier, about nine leagues distant, where the Fathers of the Faith had just removed their boarding-school. Mother Blin discussed the conditions in order to lay them before the foundress. At the same time, the latter was invited to Namur by the bishop of the diocese, Monseigneur Pisani de la Gaude. This excellent prelate had heard of Mother Julia and her Institute from the Fathers of the Faith, and was desirous of consulting her about the establishment of a house of our order at Namur. He thought the Sisters of Notre Dame would meet the wants of his flock. One of the fathers, therefore, wrote to the foundress to come to Namur. She made the journey in the middle of January. After two or three fatiguing days, she arrived at night at the gates of the city. It was snowing fast. Mother Julia was wet and chilled. In this pitiful state she presented herself at the bishop's. A servant, judging her from her exterior, received her unkindly, and sent her away to seek lodgings in a city where she knew no one. The bishop, informed of her arrival, showed her every attention. He retained her three days at his residence, and everything was arranged about the sisters going to Namur the following summer. This prelate, as distinguished for his virtues and personal qualities as for the nobility of

his birth, conceived thenceforth a special love for the sisters who were to devote themselves to the most destitute portion of his flock, and he did not cease afterwards giving them proofs of a regard truly paternal. He did not delay procuring a house for them near his palace, and furnishing it with everything necessary.

On the 4th of February, 1807, Mother Julia arrived at Amiens. On the 21st, she accompanied the sisters she had selected to go to Mont Didier. A school was soon opened here. There were sixty pupils on the first day, which began with a solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost. In a short time, the sisters had gained the esteem of the inhabitants, who gladly confided the education of their children to them. Mother Julia remained twelve days at Mont Didier, to establish everything upon a solid basis. She also took advantage of the opportunity to consult Father Leblanc on several points respecting the internal affairs of the community, about which their confessor did not always agree with the Rev. Father Varin. God permitted this to be so, for the sanctification of his faithful servant. In fact, nothing was more painful to her than the opposition she was obliged to manifest to the wishes of those whom faith made her regard as the representatives of God upon earth. No other cross had ever weighed so heavily upon her soul. And it seemed as if their confessor had been appointed expressly to make

her drink this chalice of bitterness to the very dregs. He only labored to guide the Institute in another path from that originally marked out for it. He did not wish any mother-general, or any relation of the secondary houses with the mother-house, or any visits from the first superior, and his efforts aimed constantly at the removal of the foundress. Father Sellier, in his *Notice sur la Mère Julie*, speaks thus of this confessor, whom he had the means of knowing thoroughly: "Father Varin directed the Mère Barat's undertaking, and, with her, founded the Institute of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart. He likewise seconded Mother Julia's designs, and exerted himself to realize them. These two institutions, then, sprang up together at Amiens, under his guidance. But, after aiding in their organization, the zealous missionary, not sufficing for the whole work, chose this confessor, that he might continue his direction through him. Unfortunately, this ecclesiastic was of a difficult, scheming disposition . . . . and, under the pretext of perfecting the work of another, he made innovations that tended to entirely pervert the primitive object of these institutions. He changed the constitutions; Mother Barat was sent into the country, and Mother Julia denounced to the episcopal authority as incapable of governing. Consequently, she was ordered to give up her charge, and, soon after, to leave the diocese. Those who knew Mother Julia

were in consternation at this persecution. As for her, not a complaint issued from her mouth. She did not even seek to justify herself, but, leaving her cause in the hands of God, she accepted this kind of proscription with a resignation which should have sufficed to prove her innocence."

BOOK THIRD.

FROM THE FOUNDATION OF THE HOUSE AT NAMUR TILL IT IS MADE THE MOTHER-HOUSE.

CHAPTER I.

FOUNDATION AT NAMUR — CHANGES AT AMIENS.

THE 9th of March, 1807, found Mother Julia again on the road to Flanders. One of the Flemish postulants was threatened with loss of reason on account of her scruples of conscience. They tried every possible means to cure her, but all to no purpose. It was a delicate and difficult matter to take her home; and Mother Julia would not charge another with it. She had to go to Brussels with this young person, who was almost as sick in body as in mind, and who became so much worse on the way that they feared for her life.

It was about time to think of the establishment of the house at Namur. Mother Julia at first intended going there about the middle of April; but the journey was continually postponed till the end of June, perhaps on account of the Imperial approbation they were obliged to solicit for each new foundation. The bishops of Amiens and Ghent had made efforts to obtain it, but were not successful till the 8th of June, the anniversary of Mother Julia's cure. She was the more pleased to receive this approval because the good Bishop

of Namur earnestly desired it before the installation of the Sisters of Notre Dame in his city. The Bishop of Ghent did not witness the success of his efforts in Mother Julia's behalf. He was transferred, about this time, to the See of Plaisance, and replaced, in August, 1807, by Prince Maurice de Broglie.

Monseigneur Pisani himself was at the expense of this first establishment of the new community at Namur. It was at first to be composed of only two members, but at Amiens a third sister was thought to be absolutely necessary. Not to increase the burden of the Bishop of Namur, it was decided that the house at Amiens—that is, Mother Blin—should support her. The sisters of Namur had to pay their own rent and the expenses of living. The good Mother Blin was to be the superior of the new house. God, for whom she had left everything, to whom she had given all, demanded new sacrifices of her—that she should leave her country, her family, her Mother Julia, her sisters at Amiens, and all her kind friends. The two mothers set out on the 30th of June, and, taking Sister Xavier with them at St. Nicholas, arrived at Namur on the 7th of July, 1807. They found their house made ready by the bishop with paternal care, so that our sisters said not even a match was wanting. This house, now occupied by the seminary, is at the angle of the Rue de l'Evêché.

The bishop appointed M. Mainsart, formerly a religious at Boneffe, confessor of the new community. He became a true and devoted friend, who had their spiritual and temporal interests more at heart than his own, and he gave himself no rest till he saw the house was firmly established and able to do without him.

But while our mothers were consoled with just hopes of promoting God's glory at Namur, he sent them new afflictions at Amiens. The confessor of whom we have spoken took advantage of Mother Julia's absence to change all the regulations of her community, and even the names of the sisters. For example, he appointed Sister Theresa superior, under the name of Sister Victoria. Meanwhile, the house at Namur became established, and gave signs of future prosperity. Our mothers from the first conceived an affection for this city, which soon became their home. The piety of the inhabitants, the affectionate and frank disposition of the children, served to attach them to this new house, destined to be the head of their order. Hardly had the mother-general arrived at this asylum, chosen by Heaven, than she wrote the following letter to the community at Amiens:

"I. M. J.

"May our good Jesus, and his holy Mother, dwell for ever in all our hearts!

"JULY 8, 1807.

"My dearest sisters and good children in our Lord Jesus: It is now only half-past three o'clock in the morning, after our arrival at Namur. Thanks to the good God, we arrived safely, and I hasten, as you see, to write you. I am unwilling to defer it a moment, that you may unite with us in blessing the good God for his merciful goodness toward us. We were received by the bishop with every manifestation of kindness. We all three took supper at his residence, and he was so kind as to honor us with his presence during our little repast. How good the good God is, my dear children! How thankful we ought to be to him for deigning to be mindful of his poor miserable servants! "Leave all, and you will find all," says that holy book *Following of Christ*. All our good sisters are perfectly satisfied, and bless God with all their hearts. They beg you to unite with them in praying that they may accomplish the will of the good God. They are well pleased with the house, not to say too well. How good the good God is!

"I cannot yet tell you the day I shall leave for Bordeaux. Write me at Namur as soon as you receive my letter, and give me some details of you all. Ah! my dear good children, how closely my heart is united to yours, in that of our good Jesus and of his holy Mother! Your hearts are always joined to mine, and I offer them to my good Jesus,

that you may advance more and more towards perfection in the holy life it has pleased God to call you to. Come, come, courage! courage! Have strong courage, my dear good children; let no difficulties daunt us. If God is for us, who can be against us? A profound humility, an obedience without the least consideration of self, a boundless charity for one another, and so strong a trust that all the devils in hell could not trouble or diminish it, are what I wish you. Lean, lean on him who is the strength of the weak. Always remember, I beg you, that strength is made perfect in weakness. The more defects we see in ourselves, the more we ought to go with them to the adorable heart of Jesus our merciful Saviour.

"How many things I have in my poor heart to tell you, my dear children, I leave you to imagine. It has a thousand things. Ah! how much it clings to its poor dear children, but especially when they have good courage! . . .

"Oh! that I were good enough to make no other use of the short time I have to remain on the earth! You will receive my letter, I hope, before the anniversary of my baptism, which is the twelfth of this month. My God, I ought to die with shame for having passed so many years on the earth, and not yet died of love for my God—of gratitude towards my good Jesus for all that his love wrought for me! O ungrateful creature! how unworthy I am of living, if I do

not die, for not dying of love for my Jesus! Ah! beg with all your might and main that at last I may sincerely begin to love earnestly, or else death. . . .

"Ah! how ardently I long to love my God, my Saviour, to live or to die through gratitude to him!

"Adieu! I do not know any longer what I am saying, but you know how to interpret the feelings of my heart. After God, this miserable heart belongs to you.

"Adieu, all my dear good children! I embrace you—ah! yes, right tenderly, in his adorable Heart. I am wholly yours. I shall expect news from you as soon as possible."

CHAPTER II.

JOURNEY TO BORDEAUX—AFFILIATION—RETURN.

E have seen that the Rev. Mother Julia was about to go to Bordeaux. She had been invited by the venerable archbishop of this city, Monseigneur d'Aviau du Bois de Sanzai. He had heard of the Sisters of Notre Dame through the missionaries from Amiens, and, as he already had at Bordeaux an association of ladies whose principal object was the instruction of poor children, he thought he could not do better than connect it with the Institute of Mother Julia.

She therefore started for Bordeaux on the twenty-fifth of July, 1807, leaving Mother Blin superior of the house at Namur, under the name of Sister St. Joseph. The archbishop conceived a particular esteem for Mother Julia, and showed her great kindness. He appointed her mother-general of the association at Bordeaux, which consisted of about twenty members, and all these sisters willingly accepted the new directress Pro-

vidence had sent them. Mother Julia wrote the following letter to Sister St. Joseph:

"I. M. J.

"BORDEAUX, August 10, 1807.

"May our good Jesus dwell for ever in our hearts, and in all hearts!

"My dear good friend, I am at last in this wonderful city, of which we talked so much. I arrived safely on the fifth of this month, thanks to the good God, after a journey of five days and nearly three nights in a diligence. I was favored with excellent company—three Sisters of Charity and two young ladies. Your prayers obtained me this great favor. It was very warm.

"The good sisters received me with great charity, kindness, etc. They are eighteen or twenty in number, all of good-will; heartily desirous of serving our Lord as well as they can in the person of poor children. The latter are sufficiently numerous. I sweat in embracing them all from one class to another. There are three hundred of them, according to Mademoiselle Vincent, who is the superior—a young lady of very good sense. I hope our association will procure the glory of our good Master, that this house will soon increase and form others.

"I hope the good God will grant me the grace to arrange everything with this excellent young lady, and that my stay at Bordeaux will not be as

long as was supposed at first. I found Father Thomas in very good health. Two days after, he left on a mission, which will last more than a month. If my business be finished, I shall go to that place to bid him farewell, if it be the holy and adorable will of God, as I believe. I long to hear from you, my good friend. I hope our letters will cross on the way, and I shall receive one from you before you reply to this.

"Have you any more children in your poor school? Since seeing so many at Bordeaux, I feel like going all over the world to snatch these poor young creatures from the adversary, and teach them the value of the soul. The young girls here are very quiet. Not a word is to be heard in the large school-rooms, which are all filled. The mistresses speak very low, or, so to speak, not at all; they have signals as at Amiens. Above all things, do not acquire the habit of speaking loud, my dear good sisters. Perhaps it will be difficult in the beginning, but remember that everything depends on the beginning. I pray the good God with all my heart for you, that he may grant you all necessary graces. Give me all the details you can; you know they will give me heartfelt pleasure.

"I earnestly hope the good God will have mercy on us all. We all heartily wish to do everything in our power to bring poor children to the knowledge and love of God, and Jesus our

kind Saviour, who regards us with so much love. I cannot write you at great length. The mail for your country does not leave every day. I must go to see the *préfet* and the mayor, which will take the rest of my leisure time. This is my penance, my dear children; each one must perform his own. . . . And you, my dears, about whose perfection the good God has particular views in placing you in that excellent city of Namur. Oh! how I shall fly towards you as soon as I am permitted by the good God, in the order of his adorable Providence.

"I have not yet received any news from Amiens. You can imagine how trying this is to my heart."

Sister St. Joseph replied to the mother-general: "The long-expected letter from Bordeaux that we received yesterday gives us great consolation. It informed us of your safe arrival, and that you have from eighteen to twenty grown-up daughters and three hundred children. This looks like a brood most old enough to do without their mother; she must return with her little chicks that have no feathers. I find myself in your absence as I did at Amiens when you were away. I only say to myself: Perhaps this one will be a little longer. God, who is infinitely good, permits me to believe that you will return here to remain a long time; however this may be, at least it is sure that my

weakness needs the solace that this hope gives me." . . .

Nevertheless, Mother Julia had just received two letters from Monseigneur de Mandolx, urging her in a paternal manner to return to Amiens: "Return, my daughter," said he, "as soon as obedience allows you." The community in which they wished to dispense with Mother Julia was not governed to suit the bishop; and, if shortly we see him use severity against her whom he has just recalled with so much kindness, it is because, constantly circumvented and tormented by those who thought they were doing right in expelling the foundresses to pursue another course, he was for a time deceived, as he himself declares. In Mother Julia's state of perplexity with regard to this house, she had written to her first superior, Father Varin, that she might ascertain more clearly the will of God respecting herself.

Here are the actual words in which this enlightened man replied to her: "Like you, I believe, after sufficiently establishing your new family at Bordeaux, it will be expedient for you to return to your old one; for, whatever confidence I may have in their director, it is not on him I rely to give your good children the turn of mind they should have to enter into our Lord's designs, and, if it is not he who should give it to them, neither is it he who is to nourish and perfect it. It is

their good mother whom our Lord has appointed for this work. I am going to write him in a friendly manner what I think about the course he should pursue, and to warn him against any change, even under pretext of improvement." At another time, he wrote her thus: "In my former letters, I gave him considerable advice respecting his course towards your children—advice that was not flattering to him, but only aimed at establishing the rights of a mother over her children." . . .

Mother Julia left Bordeaux on the 12th of November. She stopped at Poitiers to see Madame Barat, foundress of the Ladies of the Sacred Heart, with whom she was very intimate. A missionary was just beginning a retreat in their house, and she was invited to participate in the holy exercises. She needed both spiritual and bodily rest, and consented; but, feeling strangely troubled, she unburdened her mind to the director, who, after weighing her reasons, advised her to return immediately to Amiens.

She arrived at Paris on the 20th of November, and stopped at Madame Leclercq's, a very respectable lady, whom she had known for a long time. On her way to Bordeaux, she had been received with great cordiality by the Superior-General of the Sisters of Charity. She wished to visit her at this time, but what was her astonishment when this lady, whose manner towards her was entirely

changed, gave her a most severe letter from the Bishop of Amiens, forbidding her to step her foot into our house in the faubourg, or even into the diocese! She wished to consult Father Varin, who happened to be at Paris, but he had just heard the accusations the confessor of the house at Amiens had thought proper to make against Mother Julia, and our Lord did not permit her to find here the consolation she had such need of. Madame Leclercq, however, felt her friend's disgrace very keenly. She wrote to M. Duminy, the curé of the Cathedral at Amiens, to beg him to intercede with the bishop, and Mother Julia considered it a favor when she was allowed to enter the diocese. She reached Amiens on the 1st of December, and stopped at Madame de Rumigny's. This lady, who had known her a long time, received her with kindness, and retained her two days, during which efforts were made to ascertain the bishop's reasons, and what course she must pursue.

Mother Julia's confidence in God, and her perfect resignation to his will respecting her, made her rise above circumstances. She did not think she had given any serious occasion for the disgrace with which she was treated, and, therefore, manifested her usual calmness and cheerfulness. She wrote the bishop to beg his pardon for the faults she knew she had not committed, and afterwards went to his residence to throw herself at his feet. It was with difficulty she obtained per-

mission to return to the bosom of her religious family to regain her strength. It was understood that, as soon as her health improved, she was to go to Namur.

While these difficulties were increasing from day to day, the mother-general only received consoling letters from Namur, and proofs of that true religious affection which has only God for its object and its motive.

"We are all very much pleased," wrote Mother St. Joseph, "to hear you have arrived at Amiens; but we are uneasy about your health. It is not astonishing that you should feel the consequences of so much fatigue. What reassures me is that you will be well taken care of. I write expressly that I may hear from you. . . .

"All the sisters wish to be remembered to you with respectful tenderness. A thousand regards to the family at Amiens. Yes; certainly we shall put our confidence in God—all our confidence, in spite of circumstances; and this feeling grows stronger every day, through the divine grace. I hope, my good mother, that he will restore your health for his greater glory; but, if it proves otherwise, do not depart without me. Let me be reunited to you either in this world or in the next. . . . Nevertheless, as God wills; it seems to me that I only desire his will. I embrace you with all my heart, and am, with as much respect as affection." . . .

Some days after, Mother Julia replied:

"My kind friend, I have received your letter of the 17th. You may imagine how much pleasure it gave me. . . .

"How much we shall have to say to each other when it pleases Divine Goodness to reunite us! Ah! yes, many a thing have I confided to the sweet Heart of our good Jesus, otherwise I could not have endured the burden, heavy enough to kill ten poor Julias like me. I conjure you softly to beg that the various trials that it pleases our Lord to send me may serve to my sanctification. I am so awkward that I do everything wrong. You know my great need of clinging to God alone. Oh! yes, I wish him alone to be my strength and support. I am quite sure your heart can hear at that distance all I say to him. . . .

"Courage, dear good friend; let us not yet ask to rest. Oh! no, no! time flies; the evening of our day is at hand. Let us place no limits to our generosity towards God. He is going to be lavish to us. Let us both keep a firm hold on each other, I beg of you. You know who formed the tie between us—no human creature, it was Divine Providence. No one can put asunder what the good God has effected for his greater glory. Ah! yes, my God will be your God in whatever circumstances may happen. Will he not, my good friend? Therefore, on an occasion which I will

not specify, I did not fail to declare that it was God who united us, and that he will uphold our union to the end, etc., etc. I shall not cease to implore God that our hearts may be united in him for time and for a blessed eternity. This is my only wish for the new year, dear and loving friend. I hear your heart echoing to mine in the divine and adorable Heart of our good Jesus. You can readily imagine what you do not find in my letter, possessing as you do the key of my heart. . . .

"Let us learn, then, for once in our lives, the divine lessons of the holy and dear Infant Jesus—simplicity, annihilation, poverty, contemning all things earthly, especially ourselves." . . .

CHAPTER III.

A GLANCE AT THE SECONDARY HOUSES.

MEANWHILE Mother St. Joseph was living quietly at Namur, with five or six sisters and as many boarders. They had from the beginning opened a room for lace-making, to give means of subsistence to the poor girls of the city, and God seemed to show his approval of this work by sending to the community an excellent teacher of the art, Mademoiselle Anne Leroy. She was very pious, and aspired to the religious life. After a time of mutual trial, they gave her the holy habit which she had ardently desired; but soon after, an infirmity she had contracted before her entrance rapidly developed—a kind of quinsy—which, defying every remedy, proved fatal at the end of six months. As she had given proofs of a real vocation, and had devoted herself to our work as much as possible, she was permitted to make her vows on her death-bed. After so holy a preparation, which we trust gave her a place among those who follow the Lamb, she died on the 18th of February, 1808. This was the first death in our house at Namur. Our Mother St. Joseph, who was with her to the last, says: "She

had a beautiful soul. She suffered extremely, and, I trust, intercedes for us before God."

The hand of the Lord visibly blessed the good-will of the "French Ladies," for it was by this name the Sisters of Notre Dame were for a long time designated at Namur; they had already done much good according to their power. They lived in extreme poverty. Their tender piety and their recollection were a source of edification to the public, and of consolation to the good bishop, who regarded them with an affection truly paternal. "I cannot resist writing you," says the superior of this house, "how good God is. He cares for us as a hen for her chickens. I will give you one example among many others. We had, as you know, only eighteen napkins, and there are ten of us. We needed more; I wished to procure some, and endeavored to, but I had no money to pay for them. A kind lady, whom I had seen only once, and to whom I had not spoken of napkins, has just sent me three dozen. I assure you such occurrences affect me extremely." . . .

Besides Sister Anne Leroy, several other young ladies of the city entered the community as aspirants, and, although they did not all remain, they gave the sisters an opportunity of laboring for the good of their souls. Those that left possessed a more thorough instruction and a more enlightened piety, and their pious companions could generally say to them, "We have not wholly lost

our time." Some of them were also of a certain use in the institution, because they understood the *patois* of the poor children, which the French sisters did not yet comprehend. The latter applied themselves, from the beginning, to commit to memory the Catechism of the diocese. Sister Xavier, who had more than eighty poor children to instruct, soon knew it by heart. "She actually mingles with the questions," says Mother St. Joseph, "some explanations which these dear little children begin to like." It was not without great difficulty that these devoted teachers succeeded in exciting the emulation of their pupils, and of procuring them the necessary means of advancement in every branch of instruction, because there were then very few elementary books adapted to the capacity of beginners, and those they could procure were too expensive. They were obliged to copy and dictate many exercises that are now easily procured. But zeal makes up for every deficiency, and the sisters at Amiens charitably aided the house at Namur, as the latter has always done since for the whole Order.

In the month of January, Monseigneur Pisani was informed that the ladies established at Jumet, under the name of Daughters of Providence, were about to leave, and he was begged to procure some Sisters of Notre Dame to replace them. The bishop, inclined to favor this foundation, though not in his diocese, gave all the particulars desirable to

Sister St. Joseph, requesting her to forward them to Mother Julia. The latter communicated them at once to the Bishop of Amiens, and it was judged necessary for her to go to Jumet herself to ascertain the condition of things. But the bishop changed his mind through the representations of others. The mother-general wrote as follows to Mother St. Joseph:

"I. M. J.

"AMIENS, March 4, 1808.

"Vive Jésus et sa Sainte Croix!

"My dear kind friend, let us always respect and adore the leadings of God's sweet providence in all things! . . . I am going to begin my letter by wishing you a *bonne fête*, and not only I, but the whole house. All the good sisters unite with me in wishing you most heartily all the virtues of your patroness St. Frances.

"Now I must speak of your letter of the 25th of February. . . .

"One thing only is plain, as I said before, to adore the Holy Will that permits all should be decided without my understanding a single reason.

"The good God has favored you in not being here at the time we fell into other hands.* My God, my God, how good thou art! Deign to support my weakness! My need of conversing with you is not understood. Yet it is genuine

* Through the departure of Father Varin after the dissolution of the society.

and urgent. Here is a sacrifice I have kept from you. It is respecting the little establishment of Jumet. It was decided that I should go there, but afterward it was all upset by their doubts concerning me. You can clearly imagine how much I am at my ease, my dear good friend. You know I am not at the extremity. Come, let us both share the treasures of the good God, which are the precious pledges of his love for us. All that I ask of the Lord is that I may enter into his adorable designs, since this is the way by which he wishes to lead me. I am still so far from the goal, from the attainments that are necessary in order to correspond to all the good God requires of me. It is my cowardice I should blame for the delay. They are not ignorant of our union in God: this makes them fear I do not leave all there."

It had been decided at the bishop's not to allow Mother Julia the liberty of making any journeys for the purpose of founding houses, or visiting those already established; that is, they did not wish any mother-general. Moreover, they persuaded the bishop to send to Jumet, as superior, Sister Anastasia Leleu, Mistress of Novices at Amiens. This decision profoundly afflicted our mother, because she foresaw that the loss of Sister Anastasia, who perfectly fulfilled the duties of her office, would be a great injury to the novitiate. Mother Julia also found this excellent religious a

consolation in her painful position. It was the will of God, and of man, to deprive her of everything, and she had to make this sacrifice.

Victoria Leleu, named Sister Anastasia, set out, then, on the 21st of March, with Sister Frances Bélin. When they arrived, all the effects they found in the house were three sheets, four or five towels, and some small earthen bowls. Nothing had been arranged or prepared. They found themselves in need of the most necessary things. There were no bread, no bed, no fire. At last, the curé of Gosselies, informed of the sisters' distress, hastened to them, and was in amazement at their destitution. He went himself to buy them bread. They slept for some time on straw, and underwent all the experience of rigorous poverty, which was doubtless no misfortune for those devoted to a religious life. They rejoiced at it, and knew how to profit by such a season of self-denial. But God is so tender a father that it would almost seem as if he suffered in trying those whom he loves. He soon provided a resource in the charity of their pastor, and some other persons who came to their aid until the organization of their school.

The good superior at Namur soon went to visit her two neighbors. How many things they had to relate to each other! . . . Sister Anastasia gave an account of Mother Julia's situation at Amiens, and Mother St. Joseph at once bestowed such consolation as only the saints can give:

"I. M. J.

"JUMET, April 1, 1808.

"MY GOOD MOTHER:

"I arrived here the day before yesterday, and shall leave to-morrow. I have seen everything, read everything, and heard everything, and my heart is so full that I do not know where to begin. I will first speak of the good sisters. I found them very cheerful and well. They have not commenced operations yet; but I see that they will have a great deal to do, and cannot do without a third sister for the kitchen, to go to market, etc. . . .

"Ah, my poor dear mother! what is all this which I have read and heard? Nevertheless, it does not at all astonish me. Be glad and tremble with joy, for it is thus the good God treats his chosen ones. Be assured that everything will be cleared up and a path opened to you. I acknowledge that everything seems dark just now; it does not seem clear which way to turn or what step to take. The only thing that seems at all clear, and Sister Anastasia is of the same opinion, is that I should make M. Minsart acquainted with the circumstances. He is so good and so well disposed that it can do no harm. Let us pray God that we may accomplish his holy will. This is all I wish. Nothing else is of any object in life." . . .

About a month after the foundation at Jumet,

the Bishop of Amiens was informed that this house was suffering, and things were not yet on a good footing. He sent for Mother Julia, and kindly asked if she was satisfied with the establishment at Jumet. "Not too well, Monseigneur," she replied. "Nor I either," resumed the bishop; "you must go there, and, if the sisters are not comfortable, bring them back, as well as those at St. Nicholas. I do not wish them to die. You have committed a mortal sin," continued he, smiling, "to place them in so damp a house." The good mother did not need to be told twice to go. She went immediately to the diligence office to engage a seat for the next day.

The surprise and joy of the sisters at her arrival at Jumet may be imagined. Mother Julia encouraged them, provided as much as possible for their wants, put everything in order, and gave them directions for the future. Then she went without any delay to visit the superior at Namur, to make known to her all the difficulties that had sprung up in the mother-house, especially since the departure of Father Varin. The two foundresses stated the case to their superior, M. Minsart, who advised them to consult the Bishop of Namur. The latter, after duly considering everything, decided that Sister St. Joseph should go to Amiens for a fortnight, in order to arrange her temporal affairs. She, therefore, accompanied Mother Julia, little thinking it would be ten

months before returning, and then only to witness the last moments of Sister Xavier, whom she had left temporarily in her place.

The travellers proceeded to St. Nicholas, and found the superior's health giving way. Mother St. Julia had been apprised of it at Amiens, but the sight of this good sister greatly affected her maternal heart. Sister St. John felt the effects of the dampness of the house, which had also caused the illness of Sister Xavier at Namur. Although the foundress could only remain two days at St. Nicholas, she accomplished a great deal, and succeeded in renting a house by the year. She even took it upon herself, by the wish of the administrators, to go to Paris to solicit a better locality from the minister. She did so a short time after, but only obtained promises which were without result.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW JOURNEYS OF MOTHER JULIA AND MOTHER ST. JOSEPH.

WHILE she was at St. Nicholas, Mother Julia received an extremely severe letter from the Bishop of Amiens, which was the more painful because of his kindness just before her departure. She resumed her journey with the superior of Namur, and they reached Amiens on the 5th of May, 1808. All the sisters were greatly rejoiced, for they had not expected the return of Mother St. Joseph. The latter immediately sent her respects to the bishop. He was to set out the next day but one on a journey of two months, and sent her word that he would see her at his return. Sister St. Joseph informed the Bishop of Namur of this delay, and explained what she wished to propose to Monseigneur de Mandolx. The prelate thus replied:

"NAMUR, June 7, 1808.

"I have received, my dear child in Jesus Christ, your letter of June 3. I see that all the motives which prolong your stay at Amiens are reasonable, and you should not doubt my acceding to your request. We are accustomed to sacrifices, and we

submit to that of being deprived for a time of your presence, the example of your virtues, and the fruit of your charitable labors.

"Nothing could be wiser or more reasonable than your intended proposals to the Bishop of Amiens. Do not doubt but this worthy prelate, the true father of his flock, will grant your various requests with as much kindness as justice. I am persuaded he will be of my opinion, and I am not opposed to them. I congratulate myself, rather, that the climate of our city, the religious tone of its inhabitants, of which you have been a witness, and the marks of devotedness and pastoral affection which I have been eager to show you, should incline you to return to your daughters at Namur, who long for your return. They still manage admirably. The number of the boarders increases, but the house cannot grow larger, which I am sorry for. Take care of your health; come back to us as soon as possible, and bring with you, if you can, your good mother, whom I salute affectionately in the Lord. It is with the same sentiments that I regard you, my dear daughter in Jesus Christ, and leave you at his feet, pierced, as well as his heart, with love for us.

"C. F. J., Bishop of Namur."

Sister St. Joseph's absence being prolonged, the two foundresses wrote anew to Monseigneur Pisani. The superior of Namur informed him

that their pleasing hopes had vanished, and it would be possible that her mother and sisters, as well as herself, might seek protection under his kindness. The bishop thus replied :

TO MOTHER JULIA.

"NAMUR, July 9, 1808.

"Having been overwhelmed with business, I am a little late, my dear sister in Jesus Christ, in replying to your letter of July 6, but I have not the less appreciated your attention in sending us a third sister (Sister Agnes), whom we needed in consequence of Sister Xavier's feebleness.

"You know Namur. Whatever desire I may have to see your establishment at Amiens confirmed as the mother-house, I am not the less pleased with your confidence in me, which I merit. Yes, my diocese is devoted to you, and will always afford you and your sisters an asylum. The field, to be sure, is somewhat limited, but God can enlarge it, if it is his will I should possess the whole swarm. I am very much pleased with all your children, and hope they are with me. Let us unite our prayers, my dear sister, and always rely on my attachment in Jesus Christ, and my entire devotedness.

"C. F. J., Bishop of Namur."

FOR SISTER ST. JOSEPH.

"NAMUR, July 9, 1809.

"I have received, my dear daughter in Jesus

Christ, your letter of July 21, and am overjoyed to hear of your continued intention of returning to Namur to direct the work of educating our poor children, so happily commenced under your guidance. I certainly had some fears, after receiving Mother Julia's somewhat obscure letter, that you might change your mind, but I am now fully reassured, which is a real consolation.

"I should be sorry for the establishment at Amiens to be given up, because it ought to be the mother-house. Your worthy bishop will yield to the good reasons of your superior-general; at least, I hope so. Take care of your health, my dear daughter. Return to us as soon as you can, and rely on my paternal affection in Jesus Christ, and my entire devotedness.

"C. F. J., Bishop of Namur."

It is remarkable that, while the difficulties at the house at Amiens increased, the way seemed to open in proportion for the establishment at Namur to become the mother-house. The following letter was received from M. Minsart, its spiritual father:

"Namur, August 14, 1808.

"Many reasons, too long to relate, have prevented me from replying to your first letter, informing me of the trials your mother had to endure from her superiors. I am not surprised at her trouble at seeing them wish to instil a

different spirit from that which led to the formation of your order and which is graven on your hearts, and to sustain a young superior who is, perhaps, thoroughly religious, but who lacks experience in directing souls according to the will of God. The account which Sister Anastasia gave me at Jumet convinced me that you should not attach yourselves to one place, and the rule they wish to give is opposed to the work which Mother Julia commenced so well, and which would not have made such rapid progress without a particular protection from the Almighty. I am not opposed to your accepting the crosses, tribulations, and troubles that God sends you; but, if the work of God and his glory is diminished, I think it should be procured in the place which he indicates. Remember, at least, that we shall never permit you to be separated from your house at Namur, where you are needed this moment, seeing that Sister Xavier is growing worse, and is mostly confined to her bed, and generally unable to superintend the sisters and schools. Your absence would be a painful sacrifice to us, if your presence were not also necessary at Amiens. Do not lose sight, in the divine Presence, of this small house, where I see so much good to be done. Three or four hundred poor children, fifty boarders, a large community of sisters rapidly advancing in perfection, ought to attach you to this work of God. We have three

large houses, with three extensive gardens, in view. They will soon be to rent, and I trust then the Lord God will rain down pupils. Even now, after the vacations, we shall not know where to put the boarders in our small house, but I hope God will give us another.

"Your humble servant,

"N. J. MINSART."

Mother Julia had written M. Minsart, shortly after Mother St. Joseph's return, requesting him to seek a house with a spacious garden. That which they occupied had none, and the house was becoming too small for the increasing number of boarders. This clergyman, so anxious for the prosperity of the community, sought out a place suitable for a large establishment. Having found one, he took it, thus preparing the way, in the designs of Providence, for the establishment of the mother-house at Namur. The troubles at Amiens affected the house at Bordeaux, requiring a new journey of the mother-general, who returned greatly fatigued. She felt every day the impossibility of accomplishing the good to which she had been called.

Namur offered her a resource, but the divine Will was not yet sufficiently manifest. Mother Julia prayed with firm confidence, and said familiarly to Mother St. Joseph: "The good God is going to do many things. You will be amazed.

We shall soon see his hand. I look upon the stroke as already made." The good mother finally told the confidant of her thoughts that she believed it was to Namur that the Lord would conduct them, and she would be the one to take the first step. She went, therefore, to Namur, and succeeded in procuring, by means of M. Minsart, the former hôtel of the counts of Quarré. She left for Ghent and St. Nicholas, and returned to Amiens at the end of November, but only to find fresh troubles. The foundresses were urged to accept a rule which did not please them. In this embarrassing position, Mother Julia requested the sisters to make a novena to the Infant Jesus, for the purpose of ascertaining the will of God. It was commenced on the Eve of the Epiphany, 1809. The community said the Litany of the Infant Jesus, and some other prayers, prolonged their visits to the Blessed Sacrament, and omitted nothing to obtain a knowledge of the divine Will respecting their affairs. On the fifth day, Mother Julia, feeling greatly consoled, said to Mother St. Joseph: "I feel no longer the least uneasiness, but am perfectly calm. The holy Infant Jesus has taken everything under his protection, and will deliver us." On the seventh day, M. Cotu, the bishop's vicar-general, came to the house. He accosted Mother Julia, saying: "Everything must be undone, ladies. Monseigneur says a house cannot be established upon nothing; that he is quite indig-

nant that Madame Blin wishes to carry away her means and leave him burdened with the sisters; and that he will take away your priest and establish no rules, if, previously, Madame Blin does not secure her income to the house at Amiens."

The two mothers were astonished at this proposition, which they hardly expected. They gave no positive reply, wishing for advice and time for reflection. They consulted some prudent and enlightened persons, who thought the circumstances too critical to think of such an engagement. Nevertheless, through a spirit of faith, Mother Julia explained anew the difficulties to M. Cotu, at this time her ecclesiastical superior. She knew the vicar-general was hardly favorable to her cause, but what of that to one who only sees God in everything? See then asked his advice respecting the decisive counsel she ought to give respecting the fortune of the two co-foundresses, insisting strongly on the necessity of aiding the sisters at Namur.

The superior listened to Mother Julia's statement. He saw more clearly than any one the difficulty of her remaining at Amiens, and told her that in the complication of events there would be no disobedience in leaving without the permission of Monseigneur de Mandolx. He returned on Thursday, January 12, 1809, in the morning, and gave the foundress a note which he had written and signed himself, but which was dictated by

the bishop. It informed Mother Julia that, having hired a house in the Faubourg Noyon, to form an establishment of the Sisters of Notre Dame, but having infused into her children quite a different spirit, he left her at liberty to retire into whatever diocese she chose; that as for him, he should take the house in order to form true Sisters of Notre Dame, M. Cotu adding verbally that she should take all her community with her.

Mother Julia received this blow with great firmness and serenity. She sent for Mother St. Joseph, that the same declaration might be repeated to her.

Mother Julia thought she ought not to defer informing the sisters what had occurred, and accordingly made it known to them on the very day she was dismissed from Amiens. After dinner, she briefly told them that the Bishop of Amiens wished Mother St. Joseph's property settled solely on the house in his episcopal city; that they had asked advice, but no one had counselled them to accede to the proposition; that, besides, the bishop wished to give them constitutions different from those of their founder, which they could not accept, and, consequently, he had dismissed her and Mother St. Joseph from his diocese. She closed her communication by adding: "Those who love us will follow us; but I assure you I shall persuade no one. I leave you all perfectly

free. I will refuse no one who proposes to leave, nor shall I be displeased with any who would remain." Every one of the sisters sprang up, declaring they would leave with the foundresses.

Mother Julia spent the remainder of her time at Amiens in arranging everything. Naturally active, she, nevertheless, did nothing with precipitation. Nothing could be quieter than her preparations for this final departure. One would have thought she only contemplated an ordinary journey. On the eve, she distributed medals and little rewards among the pupils, as she did every month; and this with her usual tone and kind manner, so the children suspected nothing.

On Saturday, the 14th of January, Mother St. Joseph had fortunately taken the precaution to write the Bishop of Namur what had happened, and to notify him that Mother Julia and several sisters were about to take advantage of his kind assurances in case of such an event. That evening six sisters were selected for the first carriage that would leave as soon as possible after that containing the foundresses.

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE FROM AMIENS.

IT is now the afternoon of the 15th of January, 1809. Mother Julia has just given her blessing to the community at Amiens, and set out on her journey, trusting in the Lord, and confiding to him all she held dear. She left Mother St. Joseph in a very difficult position, but that great soul, as generous as humble, always proved equal to every requirement.

It was in the middle of winter. The cold was severe during the first days of the journey. The good mother suffered more for her children than herself, and was edified by the courage she had inspired them with. "My dear kind friend," she wrote Mother St. Joseph, "we have, thanks to the Lord, arrived safely at Doulens, very cold, but full of courage, and in great peace and love in our Lord Jesus Christ. May the divine love of our good Jesus inflame all our hearts! Oh! yes, yes! tell all the good sisters that the travellers are all animated with the Spirit of God—that their hearts expand in a thousand, thousand thanksgivings for the mercies of the Lord. How delightful it is to be cold, when the love of our Lord warms the heart! Oh! yes, yes! she is a

thousand times happy whom the good God inflames with such a fire!" etc.

The cold finally prevented the horses from proceeding. They were constantly falling down. The poor sisters were obliged to walk five or six leagues in the severest weather. Mother Julia took the lead, and it would seem as if, walking in her steps, they participated in the extraordinary courage which animated her soul. She sang, paraphrasing in her way, the verse of a hymn familiar to them all (upon the assembled apostles):

> "Courons, allons porter nos pas,
> Dans tous les lieux où l'on respire,
> Affrontons glaces et verglas."

The sisters experienced the same interior joy, and the peace of God recompensed them for all their sacrifices.

Our Lord soon gave them a particular proof of the care with which he watched over them. The coachman, whom the bad weather and consequent delays had, doubtless, put in rather an ill-humor, stopped, one evening, before an isolated hut of very poor appearance, declaring they must put up there for the night. There was only one room, in which there were two truckle-beds, revoltingly filthy. Some young children were crying in their cradles. Several young men of very bad appearance were at this moment with the

landlord of the so-called inn—a man of large stature, with a sinister face and coarse, rough manners. Mother Julia had no sooner glanced into this kennel than she was seized with terror. "My God," she cried, "what kind of a place is this? What will become of my children if we remain here?" But it was impossible to draw back, for it was eight o'clock in the evening. The moon only shed a doubtful light; the horses had been unharnessed, and the carriage unloaded. How could she induce the driver to consent to seek a new halting-place? Mother Julia, therefore, entered the hut, confiding all her anxiety to the divine Heart, and imploring assistance. She manifested no uneasiness before her host or to the sisters, whom she did not wish to alarm. The latter had separated the luggage, and each one held her own package. They ate a *soupe au lait* in broken plates which they would have liked to wash before using. The young men went away, telling the master they would return. Mother Julia, terribly preoccupied, went out of the hut for a moment, and there found a messenger from heaven, as if in answer to her desires, who accosted her, and whispered, "Ah! this is a bad place for you; endeavor to go further; do not remain here!" Mother Julia wished him to tell why, but (adds Mother St. Joseph), without explaining himself more clearly, he left her very much afraid. She dreaded the intended return

of the young men. What was to be done? The night was advanced and the horses greatly needed rest. How could she induce the coachman to set off instantly for reasons he would not see the force of? Mother Julia prayed with fervor, and returned to her children. Two of them went out together, and met a woman who repeated the same words their mother had heard. Sister Gertrude secretly warned the superior-general, who, seeing the coachman approaching, went to meet him, begging the Lord to render him favorable to her request, and to deliver his servants from danger. She then made known her apprehensions to this man, begging him to proceed two leagues to find more suitable lodgings. The coachman, though somewhat rough, was upright. He saw his imprudence, and consented to harness his horses immediately. Mother Julia's bounty added to his complacency. They agreed upon the means to be used with the innkeeper, and went in one after the other. After some moments of indifferent conversation, Mother Julia enquired for their chambers where they were to sleep. She knew what he would say, but wished to show her host the necessity of leaving. He replied that the family would sleep in the barn, and give up their two beds to her. Then Mother Julia consulted the coachman, as if for the first time, about the possibility of proceeding several leagues further. The latter, after some show of resistance,

yielded, and their departure was arranged, notwithstanding the eager protestations on the part of the host. At this very instant, relates Father Sellier, who had the account from Mother Julia's own lips, and without being able to account for it unless by the assistance of good angels, the horses were found harnessed, and the sisters with their luggage replaced in the carriage. The coachman, fearing pursuit, hurried away, and before long they arrived at a hotel where they could safely pass the remainder of the night. They were congratulated on having escaped great danger, and told that the inn they had left was a place of very ill repute.

Another incident, but more pleasing, happened to the pious travellers during their cold and difficult journey. Several carriages had been detained by the weather, and the way was filled up at the gates of Lille. Each one had to await its turn, and Mother Julia decided to proceed on foot with her companions till the driver should overtake them. It was so long before he came that they felt the need of rest and some refreshments. Mother Julia, who preferred resting among the friends of God, went from one cottage to another of a neighboring hamlet, examining and considering where she should seek asylum. "No, God is not here," she said, pausing at one door, and turned to another, "Neither is this the place." Finally, as if yielding to a celestial in-

spiration, she knocked sharply at a third, saying, "This is the place; let us go in." A woman opened the door, and manifested great joy at seeing them. "Sisters!" she exclaimed, "I thought there were no more in the world!" She called her husband to participate in her joy, and her young son to receive the reverend mother's blessing. Then the little Nicholas was sent out on the highway to watch for the carriage and announce its arrival. The sisters made a rural repast in the midst of this truly patriarchal family. They talked only of God, the benefit of a religious education, and the sad times they had passed through. Mother Julia was at her ease in the midst of those who loved the Lord; but, always alive to the wants of the moment, she wished to ascertain if the young sentinel was at his post. It was well she did, for the carriage was rapidly approaching, and young Nicholas was so absorbed in his prospects at a game of marbles that he had forgotten there was anything else in the world to attend to. There were also other little adventures that marked their long and tiresome journey, but at last they arrived at Namur. Ah! it was especially at entering what was thenceforth to be the mother-house, that tears, but of joy, fell from every eye. Blessed moment that repaid long months of suffering! Good Mother Julia, if you could at this moment have foreseen the future, you surely would have been

consoled. You would have seen a numerous congregation, striving to love and serve God with all their hearts, and imitating you in their love for the poorest and most abandoned children. You would have seen the house of benedictions, which you have just entered after so many agitations, become the source of light and life to all the other houses of our order, and where, I trust, the heart of every Sister of Notre Dame will for ever centre its affections.

But God, who always mingles some sweetness in the bitter cup, infuses also some bitterness into every joy on earth, however pure the source. It is only in heaven that the cup of happiness is pure. The Bishop of Amiens, desirous of justifying his treatment of Mother Julia, sent ample details of all that had occurred to the Bishop of Namur. This package arrived before the foundress. When she presented herself at the bishop's residence, Monseigneur Pisani received her coldly, and said, "I did not invite you. You have removed a community in the dead of winter. Beware, sister; people who have had revelations have been damned for disobedience, etc. You have come without notifying me." "Excuse me, monseigneur, Sister St. Joseph wrote you." "She wrote me before all this." "Examine the date, if you please, monseigneur." Fortunately His Grace found the letter of January 14, notifying him of their arrival. But the bishop feared, if he

gave his approval to the removal, he would be embroiled with the Bishop of Amiens, and all that had been communicated to him from so respectable a source greatly perplexed his mind. Mother Julia, in this long interview of two hours, profited by all the bishop thought it proper to say to her, and did not show him, till the end, her letter of dismissal. He then saw that she had broken no laws, and, touched by her humility, his tone became milder.

Mother Julia speaks thus of this interview in a letter to Mother St. Joseph:

"May the name of the Lord be for ever praised and blessed! All our sisters are as happy as they can be, and thankful to the good God. The Bishop of Namur has informed me of all that has been written him. It was very beneficial to hear. I kissed the divine hand. I also showed His Grace the letter the Bishop of Amiens wrote me. . . . After a sufficiently long interview, he had the kindness to invite me to dine with him. I am filled with astonishment at God's mercy towards us. My dear friend, how many things we shall have to say to each other when I have the consolation of embracing you! Let us, at all times, bless the hand of the good God. The bishop has charged me to tell you to do as I did; that is, to leave all those who remain perfectly free, but if they wish to come, bring them all. The house is

large enough to receive them, and more too; if the good God sends them, he will extend our walls. Oh! may the holy and adorable will of my God be for ever done. . . . M. Minsart is overjoyed. He is flying around to obtain all we need.

"Do not fail to bring the sacred vessels, the tabernacle, and everything that has been given us for our chapel. They all belong to us. We will be as mild as possible, but I am quite sure of what I say, that everything belongs to us. . . . All the sisters are eager to see you. The good God gives them so much strength and courage that they seem supernatural. Everything seems easy to them. They disregard the most fatiguing work. I do not cease thanking the good God interiorly."

CHAPTER VI.

MOTHER ST. JOSEPH'S RETURN.

GOOD Mother St. Joseph was in a kind of purgatory at Amiens. With a delicate conscience, she was obliged to resist respectable authority, and constantly needed, for her peace of mind, a counterpoise of greater weight, which would clearly manifest the will of God, and sustain the work to which she had consecrated her property and her life. They endeavored to persuade her that Mother Julia was in error—that her course was one of illusion and disobedience—that she would not be successful, and would soon return to beg for forgiveness; but Mother St. Joseph understood the case thoroughly, and God sustained her.

"We are very much at our ease, my dear mother, when we only desire God's will, and I am full of peace. I believe this is to purify the work. I cannot regard all these perplexities as an evil, for there is no evil but sin.

"I trust, my dear mother, that things will succeed better elsewhere for the glory of God, which ought to be our only end. I embrace you with the assurance of my very sincere and respectful

attachment. Pray God that I may make no blunders, which I am very capable of. A thousand assurances of affection to all our good sisters. How I long to see them again! I am your very humble and obedient daughter,

"FRANCOISE BLIN, OR SISTER ST. JOSEPH."

Three days after the departure of the foundress a second band of sisters left Amiens for Namur. Mother Jane, the Mistress of Novices, was at their head. These were the infirm sisters, according to Mother Julia's orders, who wished, she said, to begin with the suffering members of our Lord. At last, Mother St. Joseph fixed on the first of March, 1809, as the day of her departure from Namur, for which she had so long sighed.

BOOK FOURTH.

FROM THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE HOUSE AT NAMUR AS THE MOTHER-HOUSE TILL THE RECALL OF THE SUPERIOR-GENERAL TO AMIENS.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST MASS IN THE CHAPEL AT NAMUR—THE COMMUNITY AT ST. NICHOLAS TRANSFERRED TO GHENT—JOURNEYS TO ST. HUBERT AND JUMET.

MONSEIGNEUR PISANI promised that, as soon as Mother St. Joseph arrived, Mass should be said in our chapel. Therefore Mother Julia exclaimed to her worthy companion afar: "Come and bring the divine Master under our roof. Ah, my good God! with what love we sigh after that happy moment, though the church is not far off!" Nevertheless, this favor was deferred till the 21st of April—a memorable day, on which His Grace came himself to offer for the first time the Holy Sacrifice in the little Oratory of the Rue des Fossés. Until this time the sisters had been obliged to go to the parish churches, which, without speaking of graver inconveniences, was the more incommodious, because, having only a few cloaks, they were obliged to await one another's return. The bishop would not yet grant the privilege of retaining the Blessed Sacrament in our house. It was frequently doubted whether we should ever obtain it. We do not know if this hesitation was only to try us, or whether God wished to increase the ardor of the sis-

ters' desires. Mother Julia, in her humility, felt persuaded that her sins alone deprived them of this blessing. It was not till the 21st of the following September, on the eve of commencing a retreat, that the good Master, so long desired, came to abide in our midst, and ever since he has remained, supporting the weak, strengthening the sick, animating the strong, cementing all hearts, and infusing therein a divine life and celestial happiness.

After the return of the mothers, the various occupations were allotted, and the administration of the house was arranged. Sister St. Joseph was appointed superior, under the mother-general. The latter started for St. Nicholas on the twenty-second of April, to seek another dwelling for her children—theirs was too small. The poor schools were held in the garret. The boarders and day-scholars had only one room for their classes, which also served as a refectory for the former. All this led the parents to take away their children.

Several months having elapsed without the administrators endeavoring to make the house more habitable, Mother Julia was obliged to inform the Bishop of Ghent of the condition of her children. She was the more desirous of seeing him, because she was uncertain how he regarded the affair at Amiens. Our mother therefore set off, with no other defence than her confidence in God. We will let her relate her adventures in that simple

and *naïf* style so dear to the hearts of her children:

"J. M. J.

"Vive notre bon Jésus, oh! oui, notre bon Jésus!

"APRIL 25, 1809.

"My dear kind friend: The cry of our heart should be, How good the good God is!

"I reached Brussels at six o'clock in the evening. . . . God, ever infinitely good, granted me the favor of passing the night in the diligence. Arriving at Ghent at half-past five, I went directly to seek my Lord at St. Bavon, where I accepted anew all the divine goodness should please to send me, or that I should have to endure on this journey. I did not know where the Bishop of Ghent was—I did not then wish to know. I only wished to cast myself into the divine arms, which I was enabled to do. As soon as I received my God, I went to find M. Bruson, who told me the bishop was at Ghent, but would leave to-morrow for St. Nicholas, and that I must go to see him. 'I will precede you,' added he. When we arrived at the bishop's, we found him gone to the parish Mass, and I awaited him in the chapel, alone with my God, and leaving all to him. A servant soon came to tell me monseigneur wished to see me. When he appeared, he said to me as pleasantly as possible: 'Tell me all about your affairs, Mother Julia.' I replied, 'Monseigneur, I am going

to make my general confession to you.' 'Well, tell me the whole.' 'Yes, monseigneur.'"

Mother Julia's charity, nevertheless, induced her to omit many things, but what she related, added to what he already knew, sufficed to make him understand the case. At the end the worthy bishop added, "When we only hear a part, we do not comprehend a thing. How could they think of making you give up all your companions' property? I am quite opposed to that myself." He then asked the reverend mother how she got along with the Bishop of Tournai. "Monseigneur," said she, with her usual simplicity, "they have bespattered me before the Bishop of Tournai. I do not know as I am unbespattered." The bishop laughed heartily at this reply. "Oh! yes," said he, "they can bespatter very well in this country." Having learned that she came respecting the sisters at St. Nicholas, he assured her he was especially interested in them, that he should also see her in that town, and they could arrange everything on the spot, In the course of their conversation, Monseigneur de Broglie said emphatically to Mother Julia, without any suggestion on her part, "It is not intended you should remain in a single diocese. No, Mother Julia, that is not your vocation. You are called to go into any part of the world." "I leave you to imagine," wrote she to Mother St. Joseph, "how full of

happiness my heart was to see the good God thus favoring our cause through him whom we thought most opposed to us." The bishop gave her proofs of sincere esteem and a truly paternal kindness. "The more they seek," said he, "to torment good people, the more I try to render them service."

The good bishop left on Monday for St. Nicholas, and Mother Julia also was soon in the midst of the good sisters so tried. She made the journey from Ghent with a lady who was going to withdraw her two daughters from this establishment. Several other boarders were also to leave.

The Bishop of Ghent, faithful to his word, consulted the dean respecting the wants of the Sisters of Notre Dame. He found to his great regret that, for the moment, there was no house to let or buy. He expressed his sorrow to the mother-general. "I am not willing, Mother Julia," said he, "that your sisters should leave my diocese. As soon as I find a house you shall come to Ghent." It was there, doubtless, that the good God was waiting for us. For this end he had allowed us to receive so little sympathy in a city distinguished for its piety and the morals of its inhabitants. Our nationality was also an obstacle to our obtaining their good-will. Mother Julia began to pack up, and hurried the more because it was the very day for a new year's rent to commence. She only had some housekeeping articles to move; the furniture belonged to the town. "I

am very much fatigued," said she, laughing. "Our good sisters have been picking up a thousand odds and ends; for you know in moving we always find, instead of nothing, as we supposed, all kinds of nothings." It took her two days, in spite of her activity. At the end of this time, the whole community left in the vehicle, loaded with all their luggage. It was in the afternoon they left the town they only wished to benefit, escorted by the rabble, who hooted and insulted them in the Flemish tongue. They were at the disposal of Providence, and hardly knew where they were bound, The good mother thought they might have to suffer and labor much before she established this community so dear to her; but, according to her custom, she trusted in God, and found in this trust so much happiness and consolation that she kept singing on the way, "O blessed house not made with hands."

Our travellers arrived at Ghent on the ninth of May, and stopped in court of the Hôtel du Cerf. "Mother Julia made us place all our packages and luggage upon the ground," relates Sister Mary Steenhaut, "for us to sit on, until she would return from the bishop's, where she went with Sister Catharine." This was a meritorious humiliation for the sisters. A group of little boys gathered around to stare at them; and the people who traversed the court also stopped to look at them. Some said they were poor Frenchwomen whom

hunger and want had forced to seek subsistence in Ghent; others, that they were evidently exiled nuns. After some hours, Mother Julia returned with the bishop's secretary to take her children among the Sisters of Charity. After their arrival, they learned all their mother's difficulty in procuring them lodgings. Glad to experience more fully than ever the effects of holy poverty, they tried to conceal from every one the destitution occasioned by the circumstances of the moment. Having neither bed nor bedding, they spread their clothing on the floor, and used bundles of green brooms, which they found in a corner, for pillows. What troubled them the most was that they had no light by which to arrange a bed for their mother. Kind Providence came to their assistance. Some one knocked at the door. It was the director of the hospital and his servant, who brought them a lamp and some beer. Mother Julia had previously told him, when he offered his services, that they had all that was necessary. "If you have something to eat," said he, "you probably have nothing to drink." At the same time he cast a compassionate glance at the clothing spread out on the floor, and, opening a door, said to the sisters, "Here is a chamber for your superior." There was a bed in it with a straw mattress, for which they expressed a lively gratitude. After arranging their beds, they made preparations for supper. It did not take long;

for all the provision they had was some dry bread, which they ate together. No meal had ever seemed more delightful to them. This bread, of which three ovenfuls had been baked at St. Nicholas before their departure, became afterwards mouldy, and like dough filled with green spots. "Thanks be to God," says Sister Mary, "we never lacked bread, and we did not care for anything more. We ate it, all mouldy and crumbled as it was, after our mother had blessed it; and it did us no harm. It only grieved us to see our superior-general obliged to eat it. If at least, we said, we could have a little wine to mix with the water she drinks, we should be so glad! Hardly had we expressed this wish, one day, when some one rang. It was the servant of a respectable merchant at Ghent, M. Lemaire, who had become acquainted with Mother Julia at Namur. He was never indifferent to anything connected with the interests of religion; and he now sent the community a hamper of wine to celebrate their arrival. Oh! how heartily we thanked divine Providence! . . .

"I have spent fourteen sous to-day in furnishing our larder," wrote Mother Julia. "That is not dear. My God, how good thou art! We procured some butter and salt, and have some potatoes. Nobody in the city of Ghent is happier than we on our straw. As for me, I have a mattress—the only one here. We are waiting till

they find us a more suitable house in that part of the city where we can be most useful to poor children. M. Lesure, the vicar-general, is making efforts to find one. He very charitably desired to receive our sisters' confessions till they could find some one suitable. Our good sisters have only five pairs of sheets in all. I shall have to buy them a pair or two. We still have five louis out of the six which I brought. I believe the good God multiplies them."

In fact, Mother St. Joseph's revenues were, with the blessing of heaven, to cover the expenses at Ghent as well as at Namur. "My good Sister St. Joseph must once more become the instrument of divine Providence . . ." wrote the mother-general. "The Bishop of Ghent, who wishes to retain us in his diocese, is, on the other hand, restrained for want of means. Alive to all his kindness to us, I took at that moment your heart in mine, through our Lord, and said to him, 'Well, monseigneur, since your Grace is so kindly disposed to us, we will do all that depends on us to form an establishment. I am sure of the sentiments of my good Sister St. Joseph.'"

Meanwhile, the Sisters of Notre Dame courageously endeavored to support themselves. Some of them made lace; others chose various useful occupations. But those who intended to teach, according to the orders of Mother Julia, had to

employ every moment in improving themselves in the different branches of instruction. Although Mother Julia, as well as the Bishop of Ghent and his secretary, endeavored to find a suitable house for the community, they remained seven weeks with the Sisters of Charity before their object was attained. It was then effected by means of the Reverend Father Bruson, one of the Fathers of the Faith, who had remained at Ghent since the suppression of the Petit-Séminaire at Roulers, and lodged with the curé of St. Pierre. He made the community acquainted with this excellent curé, who was formerly a monk of the Abbey of St. Pierre. The latter earnestly desired to obtain a house for the benefit of the poor girls of his parish; and for this end he requested the Baron de Coppens to allow the sisters the temporary use of a large house he owned near the church. There was a fine garden connected with it. The Baron, who was a man of piety, granted the united request of his pastor and Father Bruson, and lent the house for several months. Mother Julia gratefully accepted it, hoping before the end of the year the good God would provide a permanent residence. "We shall all sleep there to-night," she wrote. "There is a large garden and good air. After this, another, please God; but trust, love, and complete surrender to the will of the good God. There is our strength, our support! Ah! how good it is to trust in him

alone! Oh! yes, yes, my good friend! Our house in Ghent is now composed of twelve members—a real community, and all well satisfied. I do not know yet if the schools will open at once. Each day suffices for itself. The good God will show us what to do."

"Then," says Sister Mary, "we bade the Sisters of Charity adieu, and went to the parish of St. Pierre. A single cart sufficed to carry our few things, and we went on foot. When Mother Julia saw us well established, she left us to go to Namur, full of hope for the future.

"The curé of St. Pierre was assigned us as our ordinary confessor. The bishop was very kind to us, and generously aided us in all our temporal and spiritual wants. Father Bruson was our extraordinary confessor. He began his work by giving us a retreat, in which he communicated to us his own zeal and fervor, and, the grace of God acting in us, we came out of the retreat full of courage."

The Bishop of Namur had been solicited to procure sisters of Notre Dame for St. Hubert, a town in Ardennes. This place, which is fifteen leagues from Namur, has only three thousand inhabitants, but they are kind, intelligent, and religious. Mother Julia went there on the 18th of July, and arrived just in time to give her advice about the repairs which were going on for our benefit, but which otherwise would not have been properly

done. She conversed with the mayor, the administrators, the curé, and various others, with her characteristic simplicity. As usual, she found difficulties on one side, and perplexities on the other; but finally everything was arranged by the grace of God. The furnishing of the house only cost four hundred and sixty-two francs. "With this sum they bought what was indispensable," says Mother St. Joseph; "as for superfluities, they ought not to enter our houses." But our houses at first are not all so amply provided for.

Mother St. Julia returned to Namur, to wait till the house was ready to receive the sisters. In the meantime she visited the house at Jumet, where there were several things to be seen to. She rarely made a journey without experiencing some fresh trial. On this occasion, besides participating in the troubles of the community, she met with a little adventure on her way back. She came near being imprisoned. In passing through Fleurus, a great number of children gathered around her. Her long black cloak, her nunlike air, and her whole costume—though she did not wear the coif and *guimpe* in travelling—excited curiosity. A drunken gendarme approached, and bethought himself to ask for her passport. She simply told him she had none. "Well, madam," replied he, "you shall go to prison." Seeing he was not in a condition to be reasoned with, she did not contradict him, but silently listened to his rough and im-

proper language. Then he conducted her to the mayor, who was very young, and seemed afraid to come to a decision before the gendarme, though he saw plainly there was only a quibble. A servant, through pity, went to find the curé of the parish, hoping he might render assistance. The latter accosted Mother Julia with a compassionate air, but his credit was not powerful enough. The good God at last rescued her from her unfortunate position, by inspiring her to search in her pocket for some writing that might vouch for her and procure her release. Fortunately, she had with her a letter from the Archbishop of Bordeaux, which she showed them, saying, "Gentlemen, you will see by this letter that I am not an adventuress." The gendarme was instantly pacified, and excused himself, and Mother Julia continued her journey.

CHAPTER II.

FOUNDATION AT ST. HUBERT — DIFFICULTIES AT GHENT — THE ABBAYE DU NOUVEAU-BOIS.

UR foundress did not remain long at Namur. On the 13th of August, she was in Ardennes, with a small colony she was taking to St. Hubert, with Sister St. John as superior.* The country was still wild, the roads badly laid out and rough, and our travellers only went six leagues on that day. A single house in the midst of the wild vividly recalled the cut-throats on the road from Amiens. "You may imagine that the young sisters did not feel very safe," said Mother Julia; "they passed the night in fear." But their situation was better than they at first feared. The innkeepers proved to be excellent people, whom they subsequently had frequent dealings with.

They arrived at the place of their destination on the vigil of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin, and were cordially received by the ecclesiastical

* Sister St. John never had any fault to find with the good people at St. Hubert. She spent forty years there, and had the happiness of instructing several generations, and of perfecting the good work she was called to accomplish in that interesting little town. The superioress at Namur, seeing her at last broken down by old age and her infirmities, recalled her, that she might rest at the mother-house. Here she died, six years after her return, followed even beyond the grave by the gratitude of the St. Hubertois.

and civil authorities. The people manifested great joy at having religious among them.

"I found the house very pleasant in its little copse," wrote Mother Julia. "There are two nice school-rooms, each capable of containing fifty or sixty pupils. Our good sisters are quite pleased. . . .

"We were treated with great distinction on the great festival. M. Dervez, the sous-préfet, was in the fine church in full dress. He made us sit in his pew. We received attentions on every hand. A new broom sweeps clean! Divine Providence orders everything. I confide all to his mercy. I thank God I brought three sisters. It would be impossible to do with less.

"The sous-préfet, mayor, and other authorities are coming to-day (the 17th), at ten o'clock A.M., to install the sisters with great solemnity, in order to give more importance to the establishment in the estimation of the people. . . . You ask when I am to return. My dear friend, the good God has not yet clearly shown me the day. It is now Thursday. There will be no school this week. On Monday, the 21st, the children will assemble to have their names entered and learn the rules, after which they will have a month's vacation, and the sisters will have one also, which will do them no harm. Such are my arrangements with these gentlemen. God willing, I shall go at a later hour on Monday evening, to pass the night

at M. Zoude's *aux Fourneaux*, and leave very early the next morning. Such are my present plans. The good God may change them, if it be his good pleasure. Oh! my dear, kind friend, how good God is to make use of poor instruments like us to aid his cause! I will tell you more than I can write.

"My God, bless all this, in thy great mercy! We will celebrate the festival of our good Mother's sacred Heart on my return.

"I beg you all, my dear children, to receive the Holy Communion for my intention, on the festival of the sacred Heart of Mary."

Our mother passed eight days at St. Hubert, to establish the sisters in their occupations. She devoted herself to this work with all her heart, and soul, and strength. Having occasion to return there shortly after, she profited by the opportunity of going in a carriage of some one at Namur who was sending two children of eleven and nine years of age to school. Mother St. Julia was requested to take charge of them; but her efforts and good-will were frustrated by the extreme petulance and obstinacy of these children, entirely uneducated. They only replied impertinently to the advice and entreaties of the good mother, and no sooner found themselves at liberty, than, disregarding all danger, they got out and in the carriage without any precaution; they even climbed up on the horses, getting between their feet and

on the wheels. Mother Julia, in her fright, vainly besought the conductor to prevent their exposing their lives in this way. But he was a mere boy, not much more reasonable than the other two, and only answered that they were doing no harm. The end of all their capers was that one of them got under the wheels. Fortunately, the carriage was light, and he was not as dangerously injured as had been feared. This accident greatly afflicted our mother, who had a tender heart. She left the children at one of their uncle's, two leagues from St. Hubert, and walked to town. The sisters' joy was great. Their mother shared it also; but as soon as her presence could be dispensed with, she prepared to return. Not finding a carriage, she rode a horse some one had lent her. She wished to make him drink at a pond on the way. A little boy, who accompanied her, struck the horse, causing him to advance rapidly into the deep water, where our mother was nearly thrown off. But, without any fear, she recommended herself to her good angel, and at last reached Namur. Some days after she started for Ghent, where she was wanted respecting a projected foundation at St. Gilles, but which they had to postpone. She busied herself in hunting for a house for the community at Ghent, who were still only temporarily settled. She therefore traversed the city with M. Lemaire and Sister Catharine, in order to find one.

After repeated efforts, the more fatiguing because useless, it was suggested that they might obtain the Abbaye du Nouveau-Bois, from which the nuns had been driven out at the Revolution.*

M. Dhondt, who kept a boarding-school, occupied a part of it. Some manufacturers, mechanics, etc., were in other parts. A fine church, surmounted by a remarkable tower, had alternately served as a barn and a powder-house. Then a machinist built a chimney in it, and set up a forge that caused much damage. Providentially, the altar, with its tabernacle and the retable, on which was a magnificent painting of the birth of our Saviour, had been preserved nearly unharmed. Some other paintings and two large statues still remained amid the general desolation. The heart of our pious foundress was deeply touched at seeing this sanctuary so empty and abandoned, but she was suddenly consoled by an inspiration that whispered she would restore the glory of the Lord to his temple, and her children sing here the divine praises, and repair the profanations that

* The first foundation of this monastery of the Cistercian Order was made in the thirteenth century, in the Waes district, by a noble lady of Ghent. As it was built in a forest, they called it Nouveau-Bois. The wars of those times caused its removal to the village of Huesden. In 1602, some Cistercian nuns established themselves at Ghent. Their new abbey retained the old name of Nouveau-Bois. In 1796, these daughters of St. Bernard and St. Humbeline were driven from their home. They fortunately saved the abbey from demolition by selling it at a low price to a Gantois gentleman, M. Pycke, who promised to restore it, if ever they succeeded in re-establishing themselves. At the time the mother-general of the Sisters of Notre Dame saw the house, there was no possibility of its reoccupation by its former owners, for only two of them were living, and they were advanced in years.

had desolated the holy place. The guardian angels of the poor who swarmed in this quarter, perhaps hastened the accomplishment of the heavenly inspiration. Nevertheless, the teacher put off his decision for a fortnight. Mother Julia returned to Namur to await his reply.

A frightful event made this journey back memorable, for it filled the reverend mother with terror and great affliction. She found herself in the evening in a diligence with five or six men, one of whom was of herculean strength and quite intoxicated. The latter got out towards midnight. When he wished to get in again, he called to the conductor to stop. The driver kept on, probably not having heard him, and the drunken man thought he felt a touch of the lash. He immediately flew at the driver, tore him from his seat, threw him down, and began beating him with all his strength, and swearing like a fiend. During this time the carriage kept on, and the minutes seemed ages. At last the dreadful man returned alone. They did not know what had happened. Mother Julia had only witnessed the beginning of the scene. When the brutal man re-entered the carriage, he was asked what he had done with the driver. "Oh!" said he, "I have thrown him into a ditch." "What, into a ditch! and who is to drive us?" In saying so, they got out to assist the unfortunate man, and Mother Julia had to remain alone with the source of all their terror. It is reasonable to

suppose she was not at her ease. Besides, the horses kept on with no one to guide them, and the night was dark. The poor mother recommended herself to God, and gave herself up to him. At last the horses stopped of their own accord. The gentlemen returned after a sufficiently long space of time. They had found the driver in a pitiful state, covered with bruises, one leg broken below the knee, and his boots full of blood. Fortunately, the mail-coach came along, in which they placed the wounded man, who was taken to an inn on the highway; but, in spite of every care, he died two days after. One of the travellers took the driver's place, and our mother arrived at Namur the next evening, September 28. It may be supposed she needed rest and something to divert her mind. The man's wickedness had filled her soul with grief, and his oaths kept resounding in her ears. To see so many and such serious offences committed against God greatly distressed her. She also feared being summoned as a witness. It was thought she would be a long time in recovering from the effects of this scene, but the following day she resumed her usual occupations.

Shortly after her return, the mother-general received a letter from Sister Catharine, saying she wished very much to commence the school, and asking her approbation. Mother Julia replied affirmatively, and the poor school was

opened at the beginning of November, in the house of the Baron de Coppens. The schoolmaster finally decided to give up his part of Nouveau-Bois; and the decision arrived at Namur in a letter from Sister Catharine. But Mother Julia had already gone to Jumet, where her presence was required for various reasons. Sister Anastasia had earnestly requested assistance in the boarding-school, where the young Sister F——, having twenty-two boarders on her hands, was overburdened. The house was too small. They could hire rooms in a neighboring house, but they awaited the mother-general. The latter had been deferring her departure several days, when she received this letter at eleven o'clock. She had no sooner read it than she put on her cloak and hastened to hire a carriage. While they were getting it ready, Mother Julia returned, sent for Sister Regis, who was in school, and said to her, "My child, put on a white cap and kerchief (the travelling costume). You are going with me." The obedient sister asked no questions. She got ready, took a light meal, and at noon was on the way with our mother. "It is frequently in this manner," says our dear Mother St. Joseph, "that departures are made among us. We are seldom notified much in advance. Leaving the mother-house is like death—something we must always be ready for." This is one of the requirements of our vocation which assimilates

our life to that of our Saviour, who says, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head." We are not obliged to such extreme destitution, but we possess nothing. All that surrounds us, all that we make use of, may be taken from us at any moment. We live in the world and yet are not of it. Our removal may happen any day; and our submission to God's will leads us on still further in the only path we are desirous of treading, by breaking asunder the ties that might have detained us.

Mother Julia received a very pressing invitation from the Baroness de Coppens to visit her at her country-seat, that they might confer respecting a projected establishment at Binche. As it was this lady's husband who had lent his house at Ghent to our sisters, gratitude made it a duty for her to respond to this invitation as soon as possible. She gave an account of her journey in the following letter to the superior at Namur:

"J. M. J.

"JUMET, Nov. 15, 1809.

"Vive notre bon Jésus, et sa sainte Mère!

"My dear kind friend: I must tell you about our journey. Arrived at Jumet, our conductor dropped us at the barrier, and we were lost. The good God sent us a man who pointed out the way —otherwise we should have been in danger of

running about all night with our bundles under our arms. How good he is—the good God! . . . At last we arrived at eight o'clock in the evening, to the great consolation of the whole house. There were cries—cries of joy—at our appearance. You know, my dear friend, how like a kind father the good God always treats me. He gave me the idea of walking to Mons. I took our neighbor for a guide, and we arrived on Monday tolerably early. I was enabled to keep up with the guide without stopping, till within half a league. When I arrived at the place of the rendezvous, the baroness was not at home, nor M. de Coppens; but she returned that evening. A farmer then took up all her time; so I did not say a word about my business on that day. The next morning there was a great deal to attend to, and nothing yet said. I thought I should introduce the subject as politely as possible; but what was the consequence? A conversation of at least an hour and a half, and not at all to the point. At last I succeeded in hinting that I should like to leave at one o'clock. Then there were protestations of the strongest kind that I absolutely should not go. It was to hurry the business; but it was noon before a word was said to me about it. At last they told me they wished to have two of our sisters at the château. The good God inspired me with the few words necessary to discourage this plan. Finally, by dint of insist-

ing, I was allowed to leave. They all wished to accompany me as far as Binche. Entering the town, we met the Mayor, whom the baroness knew. She begged him to go back, which he did, in spite of his urgent business. It would take too much time to give an account of this interview. At the end, the Mayor requested my address.

"I left with my guide at half-past three, and had to walk four long leagues through a worse region than Ardennes. We arrived at Jumet at nine in the evening. I was extremely tired, as you may suppose; but the earnest prayers of my dear children supported me.

"A letter from Sister Catharine came to-day, (Wednesday, the 15th) for me to go to Ghent, because the gentleman at the Abbaye-au-Bois is about to leave, and wishes to see me about the arrangements. I leave to-morrow, the 16th. As to my return, I do not know when it will take place. But after all, as the good God wishes! Adieu, my dear kind friend! Let us have great courage in all God requires of us, and great trust in him.

"JULIA BILLIART,
"Unworthy Sister of Notre Dame."

Mother Julia arrived at Ghent on Friday evening; went to see the curé on Saturday; and, finding he had hired a house, she promised to

take possession of it at once. The sisters went into it the next day, having sent all they needed in advance; and the good mother, after six months' travelling, misfortunes, and contradictions, from the time of leaving St. Nicholas, had at last the consolation of being able to write her worthy assistant:

"How good the good God is! The good God is very good, my dear friend. I have moved the sisters into their new house. They already have one hundred and thirty-two pupils, without reckoning the day-scholars, who will not enter till next month. There are as many poor children as stones. I do not see how our sisters can suffice for so many; but the good God, like a kind father, will provide. I did not expect we should obtain Nouveau-Bois, after so many ups and downs—enough to fill a volume. At the moment I had quite given up all hope, I was informed we could have it, but on such and such conditions that I had to go the next day and discuss them as well as I could. See my trust; I believe it is the good God who has effected it. When I showed the conditions to the Bishop of Ghent, I did not think the establishment would be made. But I wished to go as far as the good God seemed to require of me. Everything succeeded, contrary to expectation. I have spent all the morning despatching the rest of our goods to the Rue

des Femmes, and in running around for one thing and another. As no housekeeping articles have been given us, I have had to buy them—pots, pans, grate, and what-not. And the money, mother, I hear you say. Ah, well, my dear good friend, after a great many steps I found things that were not dear, and still have some crowns in my pocket. I hardly know how."

The children that filled the school-rooms of the Sisters of Notre Dame were ignorant to a degree that we can now hardly form an idea of—the consequence of their parents' entire want of instruction. "I am in the midst of a band of wretched little creatures, in body and soul," wrote the superior. "It is not I that the work falls on, but wholly on our Flemish sisters, for, out of the large number, there are only five or six who understand French, which is no great things. We have reason to groan over the ignorance of the pupils, and still more over that of their parents. The mother of one of them has been married thirty years, and does not even know her prayers. How can she teach them to her seventeen children? How this should encourage us, dear sister, in fulfilling the duties of our state, seeing the necessity of instructing these poor people who have not the happiness of knowing God, and who suffer so much, and generally without merit, for want of this knowledge!"

We have just seen that Mother Julia had finally rented Nouveau-Bois for her congregation. The business was concluded in this way. The very day she took possession of the house in the parish of St. Pierre, she went to see M. Dhondt at his request. He raised some obstacles, and ended by saying, "I will give you my final decision to-morrow noon." Our mother, also, asked for a short time, because she wished to consult the bishop before positively taking the lease. The bishop advised her to secure the house. As soon as she had received his advice, she went with M. Lemaire to see the two old nuns of Nouveau-Bois. But when they saw Mother Julia, in her poor attire, applying for their antique abbey, they became distrustful. "What!" they exclaimed to M. Lemaire, "is that the one?" and one of them laughed heartily. Nothing would have been done, had not M. Lemaire offered to become responsible. At this the ladies changed their tone, and everything ended favorably. They afterwards manifested great esteem and good-will for Mother Julia, procured boarders for the school, and treated her as kindly as possible.

The mother-general, on her way to see Madame Pycke, met her son, a pious young man, destined to the priesthood. After some explanations, he inquired if it was she who had been cured in so extraordinary a manner. Mother Julia could not deny it. He treated her very politely, and his

mother afforded her every facility for obtaining the lease.

Our good mother returned to Namur on the 28th of November, accompanied by a postulant.

CHAPTER III.

JOURNEY TO BREDA — ACQUISITION OF THE HOUSE AT NAMUR — FOUNDATION AT NOUVEAU-BOIS.

EVERAL respectable persons urged Mother Julia, with plausible reasons, to go to Breda, where a young lady, who had founded a school, wished to confide it to her. After some days' rest at the mother-house, she left at the beginning of December. She had to travel on frightful roads, which were so flooded that the horses had to wade. Nevertheless, by the grace of God, she arrived, and found the lady to whom she had been directed—an excellent person, but one who could decide upon nothing, and the mother took leave of her, consoling herself for having made a useless journey by the hope of having accomplished the will of God. Providence awaited her at Brussels. As she was obliged to pass several hours here before her carriage would be ready, she suddenly bethought herself to call on the Countess de Ribaucourt, one of the heirs of the house at Namur. What was not her surprise when, after the first civilities, the countess said to her, "Reverend mother, our property was divided yesterday, and the house

you occupy fell to my portion." Mother Julia politely replied she was very much pleased. "Not much," resumed the lady; "it is valued at fifteen thousand francs, and M. de Ribaucourt will not take a sou less than it was appraised."

The house in question, it is true, was only a part of that now occupied, but it suited us, and we knew there were others who wished to buy it. Monseigneur Pisani, therefore, advised our mothers to take it, and pay for it when the deed was given. This was done at Brussels, where they went for the purpose, on the 13th of December, 1809. They returned on the 14th to chant the *Te Deum* at the mother-house.

But the end of the year was at hand, and the Bishop of Ghent urged Mother Julia to come at once with some good sisters to open the house at Nouveau-Bois. This manner of acting suited our mother, who was neither slow nor timid. She said, therefore, to the superior at Namur: "Although no one aids us, we must keep on, and, if we have to be at all the expense, not draw back." This was indeed what happened. The Bishop of Namur was of the opinion of the Prince de Broglie. The two mothers, therefore, started for Ghent on the 12th of February, 1810, taking with them two chosen sisters for this important foundation.

The first Sisters of Nouveau-Bois slept for some time on a simple paillasse, placed on the floor,

with only their garments for covering, and during the first days they were destitute of many things, having only two old broken chairs, which they had found, to sit on, and other things accordingly. They only made a little fire in the kitchen at the time for making the *maigre potage*. One day there remained only a piece of bread, not too large for one's breakfast. The superior, so given to fasting and other austerities herself, felt her heart sinking at the sight of the sisters. She set the bread before them without saying it was the last. I do not know how it happened, but a little of it still remained for dinner; but the good God, who always comes to our aid at the right time, inspired a charitable person to send them a bag of flour and some money. This was not the only time God manifested his care for his poor servants. At that time there was only a very small garden belonging to the part of the house the sisters occupied, but they had the use of a large paved court. One day, the superior and the sisters agreed to remove the pavement, dig up the court, and plant it with potatoes, hoping for a good crop sufficient for the following year. This plan was carried out, and the potatoes had come up luxuriantly when Mother Julia arrived at Nouveau-Bois. "What is that, my child?" said she to Sister Catharine, who came to meet her. "Have we nothing more to expect from God? Go for the sisters and all

the scholars, make them run about and tread down these potatoes, and restore the court to its former condition." The superior immediately obeyed, and accused herself of a want of trust in God. Mother Julia said to her, "Rely on the Lord, and not on your industry."

The foundress did not delay making the acquaintance of the excellent curé of St. Anne's parish, in which the new house was situated, and also the curé of the cathedral, that these gentlemen might send the sisters at Nouveau-Bois some poor children to be instructed. She had made it a rule to receive only those who had tickets from their own pastor, and preferred to have only a few at the opening of a school, that the first scholars might acquire some notions of discipline, and become an example to others. Mother Julia had learned by experience that it is more difficult to subject a large number of pupils to silence and good order in a new school. God blessed the designs of our mother, because she only sought his glory. She had the consolation of seeing two poor-schools formed in the abbey, which gave great hopes to their devoted teachers. "More than eighty children have presented themselves since the 8th inst.," wrote the mother-general on the 10th of March. "It is like a procession of mothers coming with their daughters to present their tickets. I have had to beg the Vicar of St. Bavon to stop giving any more till Easter.

He says we could soon have a thousand, if we like. We only wish sixty, till after the grand festivals. We take them six at a time, to preserve good order. The school at St. Pierre succeeds well, thanks to the good God. We must pray a good deal that God in his goodness may shower a blessing upon his work."

Mother Julia was again among her children at Namur, on the 16th of March. Her health was somewhat affected by fatigue and annoyances of all kinds. She remained about three weeks at the mother-house; but the spiritual and temporal wants of the house at St. Hubert drew her from the repose she found so delicious. There, as elsewhere, thorns grew among the roses. There, also, as in most of the places where we have houses, the good God, in addition to the ecclesiastical superiors, our natural protectors, raised up aid for the moment of need in some devoted layman. At St. Hubert, it was M. Zoude du Fourneau, whom Mother Julia mentions in nearly all the letters which relate to the establishment of that house. It was he who smoothed the difficulties with municipal authorities and the superior administration; who exerted himself that the sisters might live by their labor, and rear in peace the children they had taken. He sent them, even, from his own estate, the fire-wood they needed.

Mother Julia, in this journey, made an important

arrangement for the community. She returned through Liége, where she engaged a manufacturer to furnish the whole Order of the Sisters of Notre Dame with the material for their religious habit.

CHAPTER IV.

GLANCE AT THE SCHOOLS OF THE PARISH OF ST. PIERRE AND OF NOUVEAU-BOIS — FIRST MASS IN THE CHAPEL OF NOUVEAU-BOIS — ANNUAL RETREATS — RELIGIOUS PROFESSIONS.

THE good God deigned to bless the resignation of the Sisters of Nouveau-Bois. Several pious persons united to arrange a chapel for them. It will be remembered that they had not obtained the use of the abbatial church. Hitherto they had been obliged to go to the parish church—a sad necessity for a religious house. But the benefactors would not commence their work till Mother Julia came. She yielded the more willingly to their request in order to meet the good Father Thomas, the great friend of our Institute, who, having a moment of leisure from his apostolic labors, came to ascertain the progress of our congregation. The following letter was addressed by her to Mother St. Joseph:

"J. M. J.

"Vivre notre bon Jésus et sa sainte Mère, et notre bonne Mère!

"MAY 9, 1810.

"MY GOOD FRIEND: I am still overwhelmed with

business. I stayed at St. Pierre last night that I might be able to write you. After the little trials that accompany every good work, the good God, at last, has enabled us to begin the chapel. The workmen have come.

"These three or four days have been more fatiguing than I can express. But God, in his goodness, has given me all the strength needed for so much going about. The priests at the Evêché have taken charge of the altar, and the Superior of the Seminary of the painting. The good God is very good, I assure you. We have more than eighty girls. Several are lace-makers. We only wish to proceed step by step, for the house would soon be full. It is regarded with favor by every one in this quarter, especially by the priests. The curé of St. Anne has sent many children from his parish. The curé of the little béguinage takes great interest in it. He is the confessor. He has already sent us money to procure a uniform for our poor children. All are to have caps alike. I have bought all the materials to make them. They are destitute of everything, even of underclothing. Therefore, I have purchased skirts and other things. But everything is to be made, which is a good deal of work. All this is for the good God. Let us beg his goodness to promote hereby his greater glory and our sanctification.

"My good friend, do you see how the good

God directs everything? The good M. Thomas had the foresight to send us a chalice, that we might not be without one. I expect this good father at Ghent on the 12th or 13th. We shall leave, God willing, on the 17th or 18th, for Namur. I shall try to induce him not to visit the places he mentioned in his letter till his return, for that would keep us away on St. Julia's Day, which the good father wishes to keep with us. He will be well received by our friends at Ghent. I had proofs of it yesterday. . . .

"I hope you are not out of money, my kind friend. After paying out on all sides, I still have some, but not much. I believe the good God makes it rain into my little purse. May his holy name be blessed! I cannot tell you all my expenses for things that are absolutely necessary. We had only six spoons, and had to wait for one another to eat. I was obliged to drink out of a salt-cellar. I had to buy plates, glasses, and other things. All this inspired so much gaiety that it seemed pleasant to lack everything. I have only sixty livres left. We must still have some other things we cannot do without. The good God will aid us, if it be his pleasure, like a kind father.

"I received the first day-scholar yesterday, for a florin. I trust the good God will send us more, if it be his will.

"I am sorry to leave you, my dear friend. Say

a thousand kind things to the good Sister Jane. Above all, carry all my wants to the divine Heart of our good Jesus, through the intercession of our loving Mother.

"As we have seen, the day-schools at St. Pierre —the free and those that were not—were soon filled with pupils whom the curé sent the pious teachers. This ecclesiastic, as generous as he was zealous, watched over the sisters with paternal solicitude. He took it upon himself, as we have said, to provide for their temporal wants, and more than furnished them with everything necessary. The children improved under their care, and everything was cheering.

"A great number of children received religious instruction in our schools, and this seed of life must sooner or later be productive. A young Protestant was one of the first to prove the effects. Having obtained her mother's permission to be baptized, she exerted herself for the conversion of her parents, repeating the instructions she received and all she learned respecting the Catholic religion. Our Lord blessed the efforts of the pious child. He enlightened by his grace the heart of the mother, who, in her turn, begged to be baptized. This good woman went daily to the convent to receive particular instruction. She attended the meditations, which were made aloud, and neglected nothing that could fit her for this great act. At last this favor was granted her,

and the mother and daughter were received on the same day into the church.

"The blessing that also attended the poor-schools at Nouveau-Bois was likewise a source of joy to our foundress. Some charitable persons generously gave the mistresses the necessary clothing for the most destitute of their scholars, that, experiencing the comfort of order and neatness, they might conceive a disgust for the negligence and filth in which the indigent often persist in remaining, contrary to their interests.

"My dear friend, the good God showers benefits on his poor children," wrote Mother Julia. "He has sent us nearly seventy crowns since we came to Ghent. It is a wonderful blessing. A gentleman and lady came to tell us they would furnish thirty or forty under-garments, and even other things if needed. We shall soon have fifty caps ready for the poorest.

"You have no idea of the filthiness of the children. They are already very well in school, which everybody regards with favor. The curé of St. Anne gave me six crowns to begin with, and sent us some kind young ladies to sew for the children. I assure you, my kind friend, that we have reason to bless God. Pray especially that my sins and infidelities may be no obstacle to the work."

Mother Julia returned to Namur on the 19th of May, with two postulants. Father Thomas accompanied them. After spending ten days edify-

ing our sisters and children by his exhortations, he returned to Ghent with our mother, and thence they went to Amiens. They finished their business there, and then went to Paris to see Father Leblanc, but did not find him there. M. Montaigne, the superior of the Seminary of St. Sulplice, whom Mother Julia had occasion to see, expressed great pleasure at the prosperity of our congregation, and communicated the news he received to Father Varin, still exiled at Besançon. For, although this good father no longer wrote Mother Julia, or gave her any directions or advice whatever, he did not lose his interest in us through his desire for the greater glory of God and the salvation of souls, and we shall never cease feeling grateful towards him.

Returning from Paris, the mother-general stopped at Plessis Saint-Just, near Amiens, where the curé had some postulants for her. She took three of them with her, and in passing through Courtrai she found two other young ladies disposed to join her. They all proceeded to Ghent, where they were not expected. Sister Mary Steenhaut gives the following account of their visit: "One night while I was watching with a sick sister, I heard the door-bell ring about half-past ten. It was our mother, arrived from France with five postulants. The father of one of them had been kind enough to lend them a horse and cart, and to accompany them as far as here. Everybody got up at once,

and each one deprived herself of a part of her bedding to make beds for the travellers. There was a holy rivalry who should give up hers. Mother Julia also wished that the horse and its owner might be kept all night. This seemed rather difficult, for we had neither coach-house nor stable. I endeavored to induce our mother to send them to a good inn which I designated. "No, no," said she, "they shall lodge here. There is no trouble, my child. Confide in God, and we shall find everything necessary." She took me into the free schoolroom, put all the benches in a corner, placed a paillasse on the floor for the man, and spread some straw in another corner for the horse. But the poor beast needed something to eat, and its provender for the journey was all gone. "Is there no hay to be sold in the neighborhood?" asked Mother Julia. A postulant, who knew the city, mentioned a place where it could be obtained. 'Well,' said our mother, 'go with Sister Mary, and buy a bunch.' I took the liberty of suggesting that perhaps she had forgotten it was midnight. 'No excuses, my child,' replied she; 'go, the good God will protect you.' We went out, therefore, with our dresses over our heads. It was moonlight. We rang at several places, but no one would sell hay at night. We returned home, and were obliged to give our own bread to the horse."

On the 29th of June, Mother Julia, with four of the postulants, left for Namur, promising to visit

the sisters at Nouveau-Bois at the celebration of the first Mass in their chapel. But she did not remain long at the mother-house. A month after her return, she made another journey to Flanders.

When she arrived at Ghent, she found the chapel quite finished, but nothing for the celebration of the Holy Sacrifice—no chalice, no vestments, nor anything else. Nevertheless, Mother Julia was not at all dismayed. But let us listen to her own account of the means she took to procure the community the happiness of having Mass said at their own altar.

"AUGUST 1, 1810.

"Yesterday, I went to see M. Vanschauwenberge. I told him I felt a very great desire to have Mass offered to-morrow at Nouveau-Bois. He inquired if we had what was necessary for the Holy Sacrifice. I told him, 'Nothing at all, nothing; but, if he thought it proper to allow it to be offered, the good God would enable us to procure everything.' 'Do you believe,' said he to me, 'that you will have everything?' 'Yes, yes, I have no doubt of it.' I started off. Imagine me hastening around the city in union with God. He enabled me to obtain credit."

In fact, Mass was said in their chapel, according to their earnest desire, on the 1st of August, 1810, the Festival of St. Peter's Chains, and on the day

after, which was the first Friday in the month; but they were not yet able to obtain this precious privilege every day. The mother-general was expected at Stavelot, in the diocese of Liége, respecting a new foundation.

"I shall go immediately," she wrote, "that I may have my conscience clear. We shall see what God requires. . . .

"Here is another short journey that God permits. Pray a great deal that in everything I may only do his holy will, never going a single step further than he would have me, and acting only according to his good pleasure and for his greater glory. I count my little trouble as nothing when the good God requires it. I hope my sins will be no obstacle to the designs of his sweet providence respecting our establishments. If it is the good God who orders it, everything will succeed; but, above all things, let it not be Julia who blunders in her way."

At Stavelot, Mother Julia found things favorable and unfavorable. They presented her with an old convent, which was quite suitable. The conditions were advantageous, and all was arranged, when she learned that a part was occupied as a boarding-school for boys.

Mother Julia returned to Namur on the 10th of August. The Rev. Father Bruson desired her presence at the retreat he was about giving to the community at Nouveau-Bois, and our mother

greatly desired to profit by such an opportunity, but a new journey to Amiens, on business of a temporal nature, prevented her. The vacations were at hand—a time of rest for her children, which she welcomed with the joy of a mother who sees her beloved family once more united. She especially rejoiced at the thought that our Lord was about to communicate himself to them in the silence of retreat—about to give them strength, light, and consolation. Foreseeing the obstacles to their journey that might happen, and recalling an old custom in Picardy, which was not to be despised in Ardennes, she wrote to Sister Mary Caroline, the superior at St. Hubert:

"Vive notre bon Jésus et sa sainte Mère!

"AUGUST 13, 1810.

"MY DEAR CHILD: I write you a line about coming here in your vacation, which is close at hand. I think you should do as I recommended—obtain a donkey. You could ride one behind the other, and would be better off than in a carriage. Besides, you could not find one, as it is harvest-time. I have just returned from a journey over roads as difficult as yours. I went on foot. I returned on the 11th, but shall leave again the day after the Assumption, in order to be back, God willing, before your arrival. It will take me nine or ten days. Should you arrive a day or two before me, it will not be long to wait. If

possible, I would go after you. I thought of it; but man proposes, and the good God disposes of everything for the best. May his holy will be done! Oh! yes, yes, yes; that is the only thing worth striving for."

On the 25th, the reverend mother distributed the prizes in all the schools, encouraging the pupils, and giving them directions for the vacation, that it might not be spent idly or to no purpose. The Rev. Father Thomas returned at the end of August, according to his promise, and the retreat began on the 1st of September. The sisters of the secondary houses joined those at Namur in profiting by it. Mother Julia, hopeful about the benefit her children would derive from it, was very active, and sacrificed the pleasure she would have felt in following the holy exercises under the direction of the good father. Aided by two or three Flemish sisters who did not understand French, she did the kitchen work, kept the convent in order, humbly taking upon herself the office of Martha, that the rest of the community might, at the feet of the Saviour, enjoy the religious instructions he gave them through his minister. Father Thomas, as usual, did not spare himself. He addressed them five times a day with as much earnestness as efficacy. At the close of the retreat, fifteen sisters had the happiness of making their vows in the presence of M. Minsart, appointed by the bishop to receive them. The mis-

sionary remained at Namur a few days after the retreat, during which he devised plans with the two mothers for the construction of a chapel, an infirmary, and more schoolrooms.

When the vacation was over, the sisters returned with fresh zeal to the post obedience had assigned them. Mother Julia, wishing to install a new teacher at St. Hubert, and to make the arrangement agreeable to the administrators, went there with three of her children in a wagon. The scholars welcomed them with acclamations of joy, proving the attachment and gratitude of the poor children. They had even prepared, at their own expense, a repast in the sisters' house, the key of which one of them had. "I mention this circumstance," says the good Mother St. Joseph, "to give an idea of the good feeling that pervades our schools. And this attachment of the children for our sisters is everywhere the same." Mother Julia was careful to see that the teachers kept this affection from manifesting itself in puerilities, but rather be a means of inciting and sustaining the pupils in their duties.

When the mother-general was obliged to return to Namur, she was unable to procure a carriage, unless at a very high price, and as she was a constant observant of holy poverty, she was not intimidated by the fatigue of walking to Namur, a distance of fifteen leagues. And we know what the roads in Ardennes were at that time. There was a constant

succession of hills to ascend and descend. Mother Julia left towards evening, and walked three leagues before coming to an inn. There remained twelve for the next day, which she thought to achieve in two stages, but, meeting two soldiers, young men from twenty to twenty-four years of age, who were also going to Namur, she found them so civil and polite in endeavoring to accommodate their pace to hers, that she preferred going on with them to completing the journey alone. The heat was oppressive, and, as usual, she was warmly clad, not having on her summer habit. With her cloak rolled up under one arm, and her travelling-bag on the other, she kept on with the two officers. They were full of courage and ambition, and enthusiastic in their profession. One of them was a captain but just promoted, and he expressed himself, in his enthusiasm, with quite a warlike ardor. Mother Julia listened to him, and her heart swelled with the thought of the sublimity of the warfare to which God had called her. "I would give the emperor the last drop of my blood," said the officer. "And I," said Julia to herself, "should I not give my God all he requires of me, my blood, my life, my whole being?" The conversation of these soldiers animated her to an extraordinary degree, she said, and prompted many an act of love to God. All things happen for the good of those who love the Lord! Her travelling companions left her at the

entrance to the town, and when Mother Julia arrived home she was so completely exhausted that she nearly fell down in the street.

Obliged to lie down at once, she passed a feverish night, and it was feared she would be really ill, but she only rested an hour longer than the community, and resumed her functions the next day. The passage from Isaias could justly be applied to her: "But they that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." *

* Isaias xl. 31.

CHAPTER V.

JOURNEY TO AMIENS — HOLY DEATH OF A POSTULANT.

SOME days after Mother Julia's return from St. Hubert, she was obliged to go to Amiens to receive some money. She returned on the 27th of October, but hardly made her general inspection, when she was under the necessity of returning to France with Mademoiselle Félicité Chary, a postulant from Amiens, who had been trying her vocation. Heaven, in sending her among us, only wished to prepare her for the crowning grace of life—a holy death. She was attacked with an illness that threatened to end in consumption. The physician, hoping her native air would ameliorate her symptoms, advised her return home, and our mother accompanied her to Rochy-Condé, in the department of Oise, two leagues from Beauvais. The invalid suffered from the journey, and our mother, also, from sympathy. It was only after ten days' travelling that they arrived. Félicité was the niece of a respectable curé at Rochy-Condé. She had every care, both soul and body, and the physicians for some time hoped for her restora-

tion to health. But God had ordered otherwise. She died on the 12th of the following December, giving evidence of the deepest piety. Her uncle gave a very edifying account of her death, in a letter to Mother Julia, from which we cannot refrain from making some extracts:

"Rev. Mother and Sister in Jesus Christ: Although overwhelmed with grief, I cannot but feel interiorly great consolation in view of the holy and happy sentiments in which Félicité persevered to the very last.

"She was always ready to make an act of obedience at the least word from me. When necessary, she made her representations, but, when we insisted, she gave up, always yielding even in those things most repugnant to her. In her sickness, she often recalled the mystery of the painful sufferings of our merciful Saviour; she united her sufferings to his, often making ejaculatory prayers, with her eyes raised to heaven or fixed on the crucifix, and begging my sister or myself sometimes to read to her or speak to her on religious subjects.

"During the last four days of her life, she suffered so extremely that we wondered at her powers of endurance. She had not the least repose, day or night, but coughed continually with the greatest exertion, but her soul was always at peace, and she was ever ready to do all that was

prescribed. She often repeated these beautiful words, 'Sweet Jesus, have mercy upon me, according to thy great mercy! My God, I offer thee the sacrifice of my life!' and others, which she uttered with an accent of love that would have touched the hardest heart. She often went to confession during her illness, but, to her great regret and mine, she could not receive our dear Lord, on account of her continual cough and excessive expectoration. But the ineffable goodness of divine Providence provides for the wants of the elect, and sometimes works miracles in their behalf.

"On the 7th of December, happening to be in her sick-room, she said to me, 'But, uncle, cannot I receive the Holy Communion before Christmas?' 'I was going to speak to you about it,' I replied, 'to advise you to prepare for this holy act, but hitherto it has not seemed practicable, on account of your condition; but have a little patience. To-morrow is the day of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin, to whom you have such a great devotion; I hope by her intercession God will gratify your desire.' This satisfied her, and I saw she was becoming very calm. The following night was terrible, however; but, wonderful to relate, from seven o'clock in the morning till eleven, her cough stopped. I was able to administer the holy viaticum, which she received in the most edifying manner. Then the incommodi-

ties of her illness returned and continued until the eve of her death.

"She had been a long time prepared for this great journey, and had no fear of death. 'I shall retain my consciousness till the last moment,' she said; and it proved true, for, only two minutes before her last breath, she counselled her brothers and sisters to bring their children up well. She begged pardon of all the family, assembled at her request, for all she had done to offend or scandalize them. We all burst into tears. She often spoke of your community, and with the highest praise. I trust God has looked upon her in mercy, and that she died the death of the just."

CHAPTER VI.

HOUSE AT BORDEAUX GIVEN UP — FOUNDATION AT ZELE — MOTHER JULIA'S QUALITIES.

AT the beginning of October, 1811, the Bishop of Namur, more fortunate than the chief pastors of Ghent and Tournai, returned to his diocese from the Council of Paris, where he had been six months. The first time our mother went to see him, he told them he had, during his absence, seen Monseigneur de Mandolx, the Bishop of Amiens, who, speaking of the Sisters of Notre Dame, said, "I was deceived, I had bad advice," thereby indicating that his conduct toward us was the result of the influence of others, and that he repented of it. M. de N—— spoke of a réunion, but the Bishop of Namur answered decidedly, "I shall keep what Providence has sent me."

On the other hand, the Archbishop of Bordeaux expressed a wish that the Sisters of Notre Dame in his diocese should be freed from dependence on any other house but that of Bordeaux, but wishing them to preserve the ties of a holy friendship with those at Namur by mutual correspondence. Some days after that, Mother Julia received a letter from Mère Vincent, containing a copy of

a note from Monseigneur d'Aviau. The prelate spoke in praise of the foundress, but, notwithstanding, manifested his wish that the affiliation should be discontinued. Whatever might be Mother Julia's sentiments on learning this decision, she adored the decrees of Providence. She saw that the circumstances were critical; the distance from the mother-house so great that it was difficult to make journeys, change and procure subjects, and keep up their correspondence under so doubtful a government. Mother Julia redoubled her zeal for that portion of the vineyard our Lord had reserved for her. She left for Ghent on the 8th of October, thinking only of thanking God for the benedictions he had shed, especially on the poor-schools, and the good her children were effecting. She was summoned to the Evêché respecting a proposed establishment at Zèle, near Termonde. "It is a borough of eight thousand souls," wrote our mother. "The good curé will give us a house with a garden, and pay the first expenses of establishing ourselves, that he may have some Sisters of Notre Dame for his parishioners." The inhabitants had retained their simplicity and goodness, in spite of the almost universal corruption. A beautiful chapel near the establishment, dedicated to Notre Dame des Douleurs, gave an additional attraction to this charming situation in the eyes of the sisters.

It was easy to arrange everything with a pastor

so generous, and Mother Julia promised to bring him some sisters in the course of a few weeks. The curé had need of this time to obtain beds and make other preparations. "Our mother," said her dear companion, playing pleasantly upon the word, "returned quite full of *zèle*, endeavoring, as usual, to communicate her ardor to us." At Ghent, she busied herself in procuring the furniture; at Namur, she prepared the missionaries. On the 11th of November she left with three sisters for the new foundation, and soon sent a fourth from one of the houses at Ghent. The travellers were received like messengers from heaven. The curé welcomed them with patriarchal kindness, and the good people, quite at a loss how to testify their joy, bethought themselves to discharge a cannon. This noisy demonstration at first caused more fright than joy among the timid sisters, who were much more amused at the efforts to prepare their first meals. "Sister Jane," wrote Mother Julia, "regaled us, on the first day, with potatoes that were burnt for want of water. She said the water had boiled away in the kettle. If our *fricassée* was not good, we laughed well over the first attempts of the cook; and our red cabbage was scorched—everything was alike. The next day I tried my hand, but it was not much better, for the burned potatoes left the day before had not improved. But you should have seen Sister Jane at work, making

her first attempts at kitchen work! 'Ah, mother, I shall succeed,' she said very gayly. I will tell you the rest when I see you."

The sisters soon felt at home among these good people. They had sixty pupils before the foundress left, which was after a few days. She remained at Namur nearly three months, one of the longest periods she had passed without travelling.

But during this time of repose our Lord did not leave her without the opportunity of acquiring merit. She had an illness that lasted three weeks, without reckoning the time of her convalescence. She endured her sufferings with that loving resignation to the good pleasure of her Heavenly Father which was characteristic of her piety. She had been forbidden to travel during the winter, but hardly had the cold season passed before she was induced to leave home by the wants of the various houses. At Ghent, the friends of her work talked of new foundations, but nothing was decided upon. "Besides," says Mother St. Joseph, "Mother Julia's children were hardly trained. It was hazardous to go too fast in such a work, for fear of great inconveniences."

In returning, Mother Julia passed through Zèle, and found the house in a very satisfactory condition. The two young sisters employed there in teaching were blessed in their efforts, and the scholars advanced to the satisfaction of their parents.

On the 11th of March, 1812, Mother Julia left Namur for Jumet—one of the little journeys of two or three days which she frequently made. She experienced more satisfaction this time than she had on previous occasions. The sisters were united among themselves by a thoroughly religious spirit, which made the house an abode of peace and happiness, and drew down a blessing on the boarding-school as well as upon the free schools, which had never been so flourishing.

At the beginning of May, she went to Ghent, and thence as far as Lille, with the curé of St. Pierre and M. Lemaire, who gave them a place in his carriage. She had business in that city respecting our Institute. Her visit at Ghent gave her an occasion to leave her children an important lesson. It happened in this way. She went to see a vicar who had obtained her a postulant—a wealthy and very zealous ecclesiastic, who asked her a great many questions respecting Nouveau-Bois. He wished to know the resources of this house, examined it afterwards in detail, and declared he wished to aid it for the greater glory of God. He had the necessary funds at his disposal, and said he had always desired to form an establishment of this kind. He thought this an admirable position, if the church could be obtained. Our mother thought perhaps the good God wished to afford us some consolation by means of this excellent priest, who offered to aid the community in its

wants. Our chief protector, Monseigneur de Broglie, was exiled. They had only a few day-scholars at Nouveau-Bois, on account of the distance, and there were only three or four in the boarding-school. There were few evidences of prosperity, therefore, and the good to be done in the ancient abbey was as yet only in hope, for the poor scholars themselves, whom we had taught to make lace, but to whom we had not the means of making many presents, left us after some months. Their parents, induced by hopes of greater gain, placed them elsewhere.

The foundress, therefore, graciously received the advances of the new benefactor, and returned to the mother-house with a postulant and another young lady who aspired to the religious life, and was going to Namur to try that of the Sisters of Notre Dame. They had both been under the spiritual direction of the ecclesiastic of whom we have just spoken.

After remaining at Namur two or three weeks, Mother Julia was anxious to return to Ghent. We prefer here to quote literally the memoranda of our dear Mother St. Joseph: "Our mother had no sooner returned to Namur than she received letter after letter from Sister Catharine, and the vicar wrote also. The sister informed her that he came several times a day to the house; that he was very energetic and active; that the workmen were already at work in thoroughly arranging the

chapel as he wished; that he ordered such a school to be in this room, and another in that; he wished all the novices to wear the veil every day, which was not now the custom; he was going to draw up a rule for the poor-schools, etc., etc.; and, when all these things were effected, he would go to Namur to select himself as many sisters as he needed." She only made use of his expressions in writing thus. He especially dwelt on our habits, finding the mmuch too mean, and said the spirit of poverty would be preserved interiorly, but, if we would have boarders, our exterior must be improved. He let fall the expression that the mistress of a boarding-school should be like a goddess.

Sister Catharine entered into very long details, which plainly depicted a man who cut and thrust without consulting anybody. He himself wrote Mother Julia, sending her the plan of a prospectus for the boarding and day schools, wishing her to have two hundred copies printed at Namur in the course of a few days, and to bring them herself with two sisters. Among other things, he wrote her that no more postulants would be received at the house in Ghent. "Receive as many at Namur as the good God sends you, but not at Ghent, at least at present." This manner of doing and saying everything alone, without even manifesting in his relations with the superior a tone of deference or consultation, appeared extremely surprising to

our mother. She regarded him, in truth, as an excellent priest, full of good intentions, but who had neither the grace nor the mission for what he had undertaken, and with whom she would be obliged to struggle perpetually to preserve the spirit of our Institute. Or, to speak more plainly, she saw that, if, under the appearance of a good to be effected, she allowed him to go on, he would be the ruin of our order, with the best intentions in the world; that the spirit of poverty, of union and submission, would all be in danger of shipwreck. She therefore wrote Sister Catharine what she thought and felt respecting the vicar. The letters she received in return from that sister and another only showed that her fears were too well founded. These sisters, who were young and inexperienced, seeing a good being accomplished, had not looked beyond the present. The hope of seeing the poor-school more prosperous had so particularly blinded them that their reply was a complete justification of the vicar and of his course of action. Sister Catharine was distressed at the thought that our mother's distrust with regard to this good priest was owing to her fault of writing her letters so hastily and without reading them over. Mother Julia was more afflicted and disturbed at the prepossession of the sisters than at the proceedings of the vicar, because she feared it might be difficult to efface it, seeing youth and inexperience always leave something to be apprehended. She had also

particular reasons for conciliating the vicar, motives of gratitude and of interest—I mean, spiritual interest—because she had obtained some postulants through him, and expected more. Mademoiselle Theresa Vandeputte had already taken to our mode of life, and it was feared that, on her return to Ghent, her director would, if displeased with Mother Julia, incline her to another vocation. "All this comes and goes in the mind," said the mother, "but should not affect the result when it is a question of the principles and spirit of the Institute." The only embarrassment now was how to untie the knot without cutting it. The vicar had already been to some expense: he had some reason to complain that he had been allowed to go on and then was stopped. Our mother prayed earnestly, and induced others to pray, that they might be enlightened. She wrote him an insignificant letter, giving him to understand that she should not go to Ghent as soon as he expected; that she had postponed the journey to a later period. Before this she had charged Sister Catharine to tell him she would see if two more sisters were necessary, and that she did not think it would be well to issue a different prospectus from the one already before the public. When he heard these messages, the vicar said to Sister Catharine, alluding to our mother: "That woman is afraid. She will be the cause of upsetting everything," etc. This alone depicted the man. Nevertheless, Mother Julia

allowed a fortnight to elapse without finding a favorable opening. To go to Ghent, face the vicar, and talk to him did not appear expedient, for he possessed such fluency of language, and had so many reasons to give, and such decided ones, too, that it did not appear easy to defend herself with civility. And she was not without some apprehension that this ecclesiastic had persuaded the vicar-general to enter into his plans. The whole affair was more complicated and delicate than could be believed; but Mother Julia put her trust in God, and, while she was talking to Sister St. Joseph about it, she told her to take pen and paper, and she dictated to her word for word the following letter. She afterwards copied it herself, with a firm belief that it had been suggested by God, and, in fact, the letter made a salutary impression. Though the vicar replied that he did not think he ought to be hindered, by a disagreement, in a work he had undertaken through an impulse of grace and for the glory of God, it is no less true that he went no further. Here is the letter:

"MONSIEUR: I promised you to come at my first leisure after the 11th of May, but circumstances have hindered me from complying so promptly with your invitation. I beg you to have the kindness to suspend your various plans for the establishment at Nouveau-Bois. I have

several things of great importance to explain to you. As you only desire what will contribute to the glory of God, I must tell you that, if we go too fast, we shall spoil everything. I have here my chief superior, who advises me in everything, and whose counsels I have always found it profitable to follow. It is of the greatest consequence to suspend everything. I still cherish lively sentiments of gratitude for all the kindness you have shown us. Receive the assurance of the profound respect with which I have the honor to be, monsieur,

"Yours, etc.

"This letter is of the highest importance. I beg you to give heed to it."

It is a very astonishing thing that, on the first journey Mother Julia made to Ghent, on the 18th of July, this gentleman acknowledged that her letter made such an impression on him as to cause an illness. Hence we may judge from what source all this sprang. It affords a subject for reflection, which shows us clearly that what appears good at first should be deliberately examined, in order that we may act with extreme circumspection, as Father Varin had strongly recommended to Mother Julia. "Mother, mother," said he to her, "do not allow any priests to assume any authority in the interior of your house. The confessor himself ought only to govern your consciences."

In concluding my account, I should state that our mother greatly humbled herself before the vicar, acknowledging that she had done wrong, great wrong, in allowing him to proceed so far. He had laid out about fifty crowns, which would have been repaid him if he had requested it. As this ecclesiastic was thoroughly religious, they remained on good terms. He retained his esteem and respect for Mother Julia, to which the testimony of Mademoiselle Theresa doubtless contributed, and he continued to procure her postulants.

Some time after having been appointed curé of the parish of St. Pierre, when our sisters were no longer there, he called in a friendly manner at Nouveau-Bois.

Sister Catharine completed what was still necessary to be done to the chapel, and the Rev. Father Bruson gave the sisters a retreat, during which Mother Julia made a new visit to her children at Nouveau-Bois. She had not yet seen the chapel. She was very sorry to find it so narrow. In fact, it was taken from a corridor. The seats had been placed after the manner of stalls, so that, according to Mother Julia's energetic expression, the sisters faced one another during prayer "*bec-à-bec*," with the scholars between the two ranks. They were soon obliged to have the chapel in another place, so the expense they had been at became quite useless.

The annual retreat approached. Mother Julia

endeavored to dispose all her children for it by exhortations full of fire. She suggested to them the most suitable practices to enable them to profit by it. The sisters at Zèle, Jumet, and St. Hubert came also. The foundress took charge of the kitchen, that no one might be deprived of the holy exercises, and because there were workmen in the house. She busied herself in the duties of Martha, says our dear Mother St. Joseph, taking part, when she could, in those of Mary. I believe that she had arrived at such a state that exterior occupations were scarcely prejudicial. Her freedom of mind in all these occupations was very great. She began them and left them with no shade of attachment, and the Holy Spirit, finding her always occupied exteriorly, did not fail to shed his influences upon her soul.

BOOK FIFTH.

THE MOTHER-HOUSE ESTABLISHED AT NAMUR — NEW FOUNDATIONS — REVEREND MOTHER JULIA'S DEATH.

CHAPTER I.

REPARATION AND RECALL — HOUSE AT AMIENS CLOSED — THAT AT NAMUR BECOMES THE MOTHER-HOUSE — HOUSE AT ST. PIERRE CLOSED — VISITING THE HOUSES IN FRANCE.

THE house at Namur prospered in spite of every obstacle. The congregation had already done a great deal of good. But that at Amiens, from which Mother Julia had been removed, daily declined, like an invalid dying of languor. This state of things opened the eyes of the superiors, and the Bishop of Amiens himself wrote the following letter to Mother Julia:

"AMIENS, Oct. 23, 1812.

"I have commissioned M. Sellier, my dear child, to express to you my desire that you should return to Amiens to resume the superiorship of the Sisters of Notre Dame in my diocese, from which you were removed in consequence of an error I was induced to commit by a man I thought I could trust. But, more enlightened now, I am not afraid to acknowledge I was deceived about you. I hope, therefore, my dear child, that you will return here as soon as possible. You will find no obstacles in your efforts to

do good. I will second them by every means in my power, and can assure you that everybody will hasten to express the pleasure your return will afford.

"I flatter myself, my dear daughter, that you will accede to my wishes, and will not doubt my good-will and paternal affection.

"✠ J. Fr., Bishop of Amiens."

Mother Julia replied as follows:

"Monseigneur: I am exceedingly grateful for the letter I have had the honor of receiving from your lordship, in which you show your confidence in me by wishing to make me the superior of your house of the Sisters of Notre Dame. Ah! monseigneur, I wish I could respond to all your kindness! I should again find the precious privileges which I have always appreciated, in spite of the cloud that came between us. I should be glad to accede at once to your wishes in order to second your views, but I think I ought to make the following statement:

"I am bound by my engagements to have no permanent residence. It is, therefore, impossible for me to bind myself to this place or that; but I must go and come, according to the requirement of circumstances. Such is the spirit of our Institute. I return, it is true, to Namur, after my visits, because this house contains the novices

and postulants. I do not know, monseigneur, as this dependence of one house upon another will suit your views, but I cannot deviate from our rule. Such is the opinion of my superiors. Be assured, monseigneur, that it would afford me extreme pleasure to second your plans as fully as in my power."

The bishop was so satisfied with her sentiments that he issued, on the 16th of November, 1812, a pastoral letter, recognizing Julia Billiart as the superior-general of all the houses of the association of the Sisters of Notre Dame, and directed all the sisters throughout his diocese to obey her in that quality. Mother Julia arrived on the 18th at the house of the Faubourg, and, seeing the necessity of finding another, she sought one everywhere with her usual activity. Providence, at last, enabled her to procure a suitable dwelling in the village of Renneville, two leagues from Amiens, with assurances for the subsistence of two or three sisters. This little establishment was, therefore, formed during our mother's stay at Amiens. Sister Mary was appointed superior, and two of her companions were sent with her. At the very first, they had forty day-scholars and seven boarders in their school. Mother Julia said very little during the three weeks she spent at Amiens. She only observed and examined everything; and, without finding anything decidedly

reprehensible, she said to herself at all that was done: "That is not the way."

"However it might happen," says Mother St. Joseph, "it is certainly true that our mother often had clear and strong impressions that came like a flash, and which she could not disregard, having so many times recognized therein the grace that guided and aided her in embarrassing circumstances. But she did not yield to them without advice, when there was reason to fear the consequences might be doubtful or pernicious."

The reverend mother, seeing everything provisionally arranged, returned to Namur, where she arrived on the 11th of December, but she was hardly there before Sister Mary wrote her again and again about new obstacles that had arisen. The foundress regarded this succession of despatches as the indications of Providence, and announced the dissolution of the house of the Sisters of Notre Dame at Amiens.

The houses in Belgium purchased also the happiness of doing good by the merit of sufferings and contradiction. We have already said that, in establishing the house in the parish of St. Pierre at Ghent, at the expense and under the immediate supervision of the curé, Mother Julia feared he would wish to regulate everything according to his own views. And this is, in fact, what happened. "The good curé of St. Pierre," wrote Sister Mary Steenhaut, "wished to exercise almost absolute

authority over the community. He sought, it is true, only the glory of God and the good of his parish, but his course of action did not harmonize with the spirit of our Institute. The foundress saw no other remedy for this state of things, the result of which she could not answer for, than to unite the sisters of St. Pierre with those of Nouveau-Bois. We constantly prayed for a knowledge of the divine will, and some time elapsed without any change. The curé's health declined more and more. It often happened that, unable to go out, he made us go to his house to confession, or to speak to us about various things, which did not at all suit the foundress. Besides, we were in danger of wanting the most necessary things, especially during the last year we lived in that house. All these circumstances, incompatible with the nature of our Institute and the care of children to which we are obliged, brought the projected reunion to a decision. The Sisters of Notre Dame, according to the advice of their mother, left the house of St. Pierre at the end of the year 1812. They were received by their sisters with the most lively joy.

The reverend mother left Namur again on the 9th of March, 1813, to visit the dependent houses in the diocese of Amiens. There were still four—Mont Didier, Rubempré, Brelle, and Renneville. But as they could not support themselves, she wished to unite them to the house at Namur.

On the 10th of April, she began a succession of journeys to St. Hubert, Jumet, and Ghent. She left the mother-house with regret, because she left behind a young novice of seventeen years of age, named Sister Pacifique (in the world, Emily Decaye), who was failing fast. This had been evident several months, though the physicians could not ascertain the cause of her illness. Finally they were convinced that it was the consequence of tænia. Although she had not entirely completed the time of her novitiate, the great edification she gave every one during her illness by her patience and resignation in extreme suffering, induced Mother Julia to accede to her ardent desire of making her religious vows. She made them eight days before her death, and at the same time received the holy scapular and general absolution. It was the day after this that our mother left Namur with so much regret.

She was uncertain about stopping at Zèle, and allowing the sister with her to proceed alone to Ghent. She left it for God to decide. When they arrived at a certain place on the way, the driver asked where she wished to go. She replied naïvely that she would see when they came to a place where the two roads crossed. But the driver did not inquire when they arrived there, and took the road to Zèle, which our mother silently regarded as an indication of Providence. In fact, the journey was shortened by

this means, so she was enabled to be present, on the morning of the 2d of June, at the happy death of the young Sister Pacifique, whom our Lord called to himself an hour after she had received the Holy Communion. "This death," says Mother St. Joseph, "afforded our mother particular consolation. She told us she could not explain the reason, but we should know it at the day of judgment."

CHAPTER II.

FOUNDATIONS AT GEMBLOUX AND ANDENNES.

MOTHER JULIA made two new foundations in the latter part of the year 1813. The first was that at Gembloux, a pretty little village, three leagues from Namur. A secular school-mistress, quite advanced in years, was the sole resource of the place for the education of the children. As she no longer sufficed for their wants, she was wise enough to retire. The authorities, therefore, applied to the Bishop of Namur, and afterwards to our mother, for sisters. The latter went to Gembloux on the 14th of June to visit the locality, and make the necessary investigations. She found the clergy at Gembloux, and the civil authorities, very anxious to have sisters. She procured some from France, where she went again; but as the house would not be ready till October, the active mother found means of making a second foundation.

Andennes, situated on the left bank of the Meuse, is a charming little town, renowned for its manufactories of porcelain, delft-ware, stationery, etc. But the municipality, impoverished by the misfortunes of the times, had not the necessary resources for the support of a house of instruction. Our

mother, who had confided the money brought from Amiens to M. Lemaire, thought it could not be better employed than in procuring for the children at Andennes a solid and religious education. She decided to make the venture. She was particularly acquainted with the vicar of the place, then M. Kinet, M. Lemaire's brother-in-law, who urged her to come to the assistance of the poor children of Andennes. Hearing that there was a suitable house to rent, she consulted Mgr. Pisani, who gladly consented to the project.

The foundress went to Andennes, for the first time, on the 29th of August. She was favorably received by the mayor of the place, a man even more distinguished for his piety and social virtues than for the nobility of his birth. He was desirous that Mother Julia should also receive boys in her school, as they were likewise without resource; and he seemed very much disappointed when she told him it was not according to the spirit of our Institute; that, in places where there was a dearth of priests and instructors, we could only prepare boys for the reception of the sacraments, and, in particular, for their first Communion. This kind of refusal did not lessen M. de Loen's desire of having sisters. Our mother, therefore, hired the house at her own expense, and hurried on the work of preparation. She soon sent, by land and water, the furniture absolutely necessary. Two sisters went there to make arrangements, and, on

the 6th of October, Mother Julia herself went, with four of her children, to found this new house.

Sister Angela was appointed superior. The Sunday before, a solemn Mass of the Holy Ghost was sung, and quite a large number of pupils entered their names as day and free scholars. It was not long before the disinterestedness and zeal of the foundress were visibly rewarded. The vicar did all in his power to encourage the young community. The Baron de Wal, Commander of the Teutonic Order, also took pleasure in sustaining this holy enterprise. After witnessing this promising beginning, our mother returned, to attempt the same work at Gembloux, where they wished to open a boarding-school. She went there on the 11th of October, with four sisters, to the great joy of the good people who had long wished for religious to instruct their children. The Mass of installation was very solemn. The civil authorities were present, and a good number of children and young people who were candidates for the boarding and day schools. After the services, the mayor read in the sisters' house an act which he had drawn up, containing the conditions agreed upon between the two parties, and the school was opened to the satisfaction of all.

These foundations were hardly made, before the Mayor of Fleurus, another small town five leagues from Namur, earnestly begged the foundress to

come there, wishing to consult her respecting an establishment of our congregation in that place. Mother Julia, who was obliged to go to Jumet, went by the way of Fleurus, on the 18th of October. She found the mayor, and all interested in the work, so well disposed, that they were able at once to agree upon the conditions, but the approach of the allied armies adjourned the foundation, which she regarded as providential. She went again to Andennes, on the 9th of November. She visited the schools, encouraged the pupils, provided for the different wants of the house, and returned, pleased with the evidences of a promising future. At Gembloux they were already prosperous. Our mother took to that house a sixth sister at the beginning of December, and found in the schools several boarders, a hundred day-scholars who paid for their tuition, and eighty poor scholars. But the house was very small. She left on the 16th for Jumet, and called at Fleurus. On the 27th she started for Ghent, where the superior was dangerously ill of a cold that had settled on her lungs. She had fasted too rigorously during Lent, relying too much on her strength and youth. She took cold about Easter, and, so far from being cured, was going into consumption. Mother Julia's kind heart ached to see her in this condition, but she hoped Almighty God would yield to the prayers of her children, and she should still preserve this excellent superior. She requested

prayers to obtain this favor from heaven. We were also to need further assistance from on high. On the 24th of January, 1814, the Russian vanguard entered Namur, and the corps behind entered the next day. Grain was already scarce, and threatened to become more so. Scarcely any was brought to market.

On the 5th of February, Mother Julia wrote one of her children: "We have more than seventy individuals to feed. I tried to find some wheat on Saturday, but there was none at all to be found. There is but little brought in for the lower classes, who hold out their bags, and need some so much to feed their soldiers. It is very pitiful. Our people are in distress, for they have to supply all these troops with brandy, bread, and meat."

"I cannot omit speaking of our terror when the foreign troops passed through," says Mother St. Joseph. "God, in his great mercy, preserved us from having any quartered on us: but we were in constant fear of it, for, though our house was not one of the designated lodging-places, on account of our instructing gratuitously all the poor children of the city, we were not out of danger, for the soldiers changed their quarters at will. This gave us inexpressible solicitude in watching the doors, especially at the entrance and departure of the scholars. Our mother barricaded the front entrance, and it was in time, for they came many times a day and by night, and knocked with all

their might. We avoided ringing the bells and going out. We fastened a picture of Mary conceived without sin upon the principal doors of the house, with a prayer that we said daily. Our mother assembled us also five times a day, to say together five Paters and five Ave Marias with our arms *en croix*. After the grace at table we said the *Miserere*, the *Non secundum*, etc. The boarders also, without any solicitation on our part, joined in these devotions. Finally, we united ourselves, as well as we could, to the prayers of the Church Universal."

While the country was overrun with soldiers, prudence necessarily kept our mother at home; but, the greater part of the troops having gone, she ventured, on the 12th of April, to go and see her children at Andennes. On the 22d she left for Gembloux with Mother St. Joseph. The 3d of May she went to Fleurus and Jumet; on the 11th of the same month she started for Ghent and Zèle, and made, besides, several other journeys.

The Bishop of Tournai having returned to his see, Mother Julia was able to complete the foundation at Fleurus, which had been so greatly desired. On the 21st of June, St. Aloysius de Gonzaga's day, she installed Sister Julienne as superior. In August, there were seven sisters, sixteen boarders, and a good many day-scholars. Unfortunately the smallness of the house did not permit them to receive any poor scholars. "This is what

our mother could not endure," says our dear Mother St. Joseph. "She only made the establishment on the condition of soon being enabled to receive some; for, 'I repeat it,' said she, 'we ought to have poor children everywhere; it is the first, the fundamental stone of our edifice.'" But two months after, our mother made such successful exertions, that she found a larger house to rent, and would not regard the terms, which were rather high, because she saw a prospect of receiving the poor.

At her return from a journey to Amiens in July, the mother-general brought back nine postulants, and the superior of Brelle besides, that house being just broken up. There were only three sisters in it: the second was left at Mont Didier, and the third withdrew from the order. Father Varin, whom Mother Julia had the pleasure of meeting in this country, confirmed her in her views. The sisters at Renneville withdrew of their own accord, and those of Mont Didier returned to Namur.

At the end of September, Mother Julia again visited the houses at Andennes and Gembloux, and found that the latter was no longer habitable. The indefatigable superior, therefore, went herself to Douai several weeks after, in order to see M. Paulet, the proprietor of the Abbey of Gembloux. A part of these vast buildings would suffice to accommodate the community and boarding-school. She obtained it at a reasonable price, and, although

the business was not wholly settled on the 18th of October, they were allowed to take up their residence in the abbey. Our mother went there with the sisters, and appointed Sister Gertrude superior.

CHAPTER III.

PROJECTED FOUNDATIONS AT LIEGE AND DINANT —WAR.

UR mother's days were numbered, but it was the will of God that she should make two important foundations — at Liége and Dinant. The curé of St. Nicholas at Liége, and his worthy vicar, M. Nicholas Dehesselle, ardently desired our sisters to found a school in their large parish. Our mother proceeded therefore to Liége, on the 14th of March, 1815, to arrange the business, but the zealous pastor could only lay before her the difficulties that would defer the realization of his desires. Mother Julia, in her reply, uttered these remarkable words: "Monsieur le Curé, excite a devotion to the Sacred Heart, and you will have sisters." A little later she made preparations for the foundation at Dinant.

During this time, Napoleon I. escaped from the island of Elba, and the consequent fighting was more terrible than ever. This time, the war was in our midst. Jumet and Gembloux were crammed with soldiers. At Fleurus, the Emperor gained a momentary advantage over the Prussians, but the great battle of Waterloo soon

routed his army. The unfortunate fugitives did not know where to seek shelter or find nourishment. Nor did their pursuers. The soldiers of one of these detachments broke open the door of the sisters' house at Fleurus. Their first aim was to obtain something to eat, and, while they were appeasing their hunger in the kitchen, the sisters, half-frightened to death, took refuge in the garret. Having no hope but in God, they betook themselves to prayer. Their fears were redoubled when they heard the soldiers coming upstairs; but Mary came to the aid of her children at the moment of danger. There was a statue of this good Mother in one of the chambers, the door of which was open. By a visible protection of the Blessed Virgin, as soon as the soldiers reached the open door, they stopped, then went quietly down-stairs, and out of the house. Our sisters, hearing them go away, fled from the house by way of the garden, scaled the walls, and jumped down on the other side, at the risk of injuring or killing themselves. It was night, and there was a great pool of water under the wall. The fugitives were six in number, without reckoning the boarders, who had remained with them, and whom they were obliged to protect. To add to their misfortunes, they found that Sister Agnes was wanting. Where could she be? They were obliged to retrace their steps. The poor sister, almost beside herself with fear, could think of no

safer place than to hide under the eaves of the pig-sty. Having found her, they ran from garden to garden till they came to the house of the excellent M. Houtart, a genuine friend, who received them in a paternal manner, and endeavored to reassure them. But, alas! no place was safe at such a time. A band of soldiers entered the house just after them. The sisters tried to escape to the garret: the soldiers followed them. Who could depict their distress? A soldier even took one of them by her arm; she invoked Mary, drew out her scapular, and escaped, while another sister threw herself down-stairs. Their screams brought more soldiers to the garret, doubtless the leaders, whom Providence sent to protect our sisters. The latter had hidden in a corner, and taken off their *guimpes*, so that nothing but black could be seen. One of the soldiers, just come up, said to the other, in looking at the sisters, "Let us not meddle with those devils there!" Thanks to the infinite goodness of God, they received no insult, but their house was entirely pillaged, with the exception of their clothing, which had been concealed. It could hardly be otherwise, as an ambulance was established in the house.

The loving care of divine Providence was displayed in a still greater degree to our sisters at Jumet. A battle was fought near their house, and they concealed the scholars, still with them,

in the cellar. The soldiers came and pounded for entrance at their front door. They finally broke it open. A good laborer in the house, but an extremely simple man, went to meet the intruders, and said to them, "You must not make any noise; there are children here, and they are afraid." "We will not hurt them," replied the lions, changed into lambs. "We only wish for something to eat, and then we will go away." They hastened to satisfy them. The mayor, soon after, sent them a safeguard, and the general was so kind as to order some of his men to remain at the sisters' while they were in any danger. They even returned to lodge there, after the retreat was ordered. At the next battle, the superior herself requested a safeguard from the commander. One of the officers came to say to Sister Anastasia, "Do not be afraid, I know the house." In fact, they were not at all disturbed. "Our gratitude to God should be eternal," wrote the superior in the letter from which these details are taken. "He has inspired me with great trust in him, and courage in laboring for his greater glory."

The community at Gembloux, though not anticipating any visit from the soldiers, was even more tried at first. "After Sunday morning," said the superior to our dear Mother Julia, "the French invaded our city in such numbers that it was impossible to find lodgings for them. We

suddenly heard a frightful noise. More than sixty soldiers were endeavoring to break in through the doors and windows. They plundered everything. The boarders screamed fearfully. We took them to the upper part of the house, and meanwhile all was pillaged below. We ran to request a safeguard, and, at last, an officer with some men came to our assistance. But everything was broken to pieces on the ground-floor, and in the cellar the beer had been let out of the hogsheads. They carried off all our provisions, and even our spoons and forks. They forced the locks on the closets, and took the boarders' silver, napkins, and table-cloths. The French left on Tuesday, to give place to the Prussians. The latter, driven to extremities by three days' fighting and want of food, wished to pillage us in their turn. But the vicar sent us a safeguard to my liking—an excellent Prussian officer and three men. The officer spoke French very well, and was religious. Seeing him among us, you would have thought him a father among his children. He only conversed with us about divine things, and I looked upon him as sent us by God."

We were also alarmed at Namur, but a kind Providence preserved us from all harm. The allies entered the city about six in the afternoon, the French leaving in the opposite direction, thus ending the fight. All this was owing to the protection of the Blessed Virgin, and so persuaded

of it was the religious part of the inhabitants that an altar was erected in the cathedral, where Masses were sung and thanksgivings offered to Mary Most Pure, who had more than once protected her good city of Namur.

During these continued alarms, our mother was constantly anxious to avert the dangers that threatened us. She especially had recourse to Almighty God. Her prayers and vigils were prolonged to a late hour in the night, and meanwhile soldiery were pounding at the gates. But she was too affectionate a mother to those whom our Lord had confided to her not to be greatly shattered by all these troubles. She endured the alarm with great strength of mind, encouraging us, and endeavoring to increase our trust in God. But the more her soul rose above temporal things, the more her physical powers gave way. She became very pale: soon after, her health began to decline, and a fatal illness resulted in the course of six or seven months.

CHAPTER IV.

MOTHER JULIA'S ILLNESS AND DEATH — REV. FATHER VARIN'S LETTER.

THE final illness of our good mother lasted three months, and she suffered extremely. She had had no appetite for a long time, and her feebleness, added to fatigue and the extraordinary emotions to which we have just alluded, had so contracted her nerves, that all remedies seemed to be useless—or, rather let us say, the hour marked by Providence had arrived. Her disease was principally in her stomach, which contracted to such a degree that she was unable to take or retain any nourishment. It was with difficulty, even at the most favorable moments, that she could take any drink drop by drop. Vomiting always resulted, which caused her extreme pain, "and caused us great pain too," says her pious associate, then very ill herself. But Mother Julia herself consoled us, saying, "Courage; do not be afraid!" The least noise affected her—so she could not endure any conversation. I often read to her a few sentences in the *Following of Christ*. One day she extended her hand towards the book without looking at it, and, putting her finger upon a verse, said, "Read that."

It was this suitable passage: "If thou carry the cross willingly, it will carry thee, and bring thee to thy desired end: to wit, to that place where there will be an end of suffering, though here there will be none." She had always been very careful to conceal the grace she received from heaven, and she must have been favored with particular favors during her last illness, which she also concealed. Nevertheless, her unalterable patience alone, her profound humility, and the unchangeable calmness of her soul, were sufficient to edify us. I do not know whether she had any presentiment of her end or not, but the day she took to her bed, she sweetly and tenderly embraced the sisters about her, and afterwards requested the administration of Extreme Unction, which took place the next morning. But the community for a long time cherished a hope for her recovery. Everywhere were offered novenas, prayers—to St. Joseph especially—and many other good works, to obtain her cure. Our mother, who was aware of it, said to me one day (says Mother St. Joseph), "You must promise to clothe three poor children in honor of St. Joseph." "Yes, mother," I replied, "we will do so, if St. Joseph will obtain what we ask of him." "Oh!" said she, "he will make you some return anyhow: go quickly to the Blessed Virgin, and promise her you will do it." I made the promise, and St. Joseph made some return, indeed, not what we

asked for, but according to her faith, and it was doubtless a peaceful and happy death that she wished him to obtain for her. This dear mother did not manifest to the very last any agitation, or desire, or fear, that was not the result of her illness, though she retained her consciousness to the end. Such was the effect of divine grace."

Canon Renson, our confessor, remained all night to assist her and offer the prayers of holy church. She was taken ill on the 14th of January, 1816, and died the 8th of April, at two o'clock in the morning—it being Monday in Holy Week. She was unable to speak after seven or eight o'clock in the evening. She expired in the most peaceful manner, without making the least sign or movement that indicated the last struggle. A glass was placed before her mouth to ascertain if she was really gone. Then she was clad in her religious habit, and it is mentioned, as a consolation, that her features became natural, all traces of suffering disappeared, and a slight color and a heavenly smile, which every one observed, detracted from the usual repulsiveness of death. She had expressly desired to be buried simply as the other sisters, but the bishop would not permit it. The funeral services were therefore very solemn, but the most touching part was the long procession of children belonging to our various schools, and all the sisters, who followed their foundress to her last resting-place. The death of our first

mother-general made a profound impression on the public mind, for every one had an exalted opinion of her virtues.

Father Varin, on receiving the sad intelligence of her death, wrote us the following letter:

"PARIS, May 8, 1816.

"What a blow, my dear mother, our Lord has inflicted on us in taking away our good Mother Julia; but how adorable his designs are! He had raised her up for your society in a manner that displayed his power as much as his goodness, and he only called her to himself after she had fulfilled his designs. I am fully persuaded that the work, of which she was the instrument in the hands of God, far from suffering from her removal, will become more prosperous than ever through her intercession—for who can resist having recourse now to her prayers? If they were so powerful with God while she was still exiled from him, how much more so they are now she is at home in the bosom of her God! Could we, indeed, have any other feeling with regard to this good mother? She who, upon earth, lived only through her love for God, is she not destined to love for all eternity?

"This is for you who replace her, my dear mother, a great source of consolation and hope. Yes: she will be more useful to you in heaven than on earth. She will give you evident proofs

of her power before God. She will obtain the light and grace you need to strengthen and extend the work of the Lord, and all your children will acknowledge with you that they have in their good mother a powerful protectress."

BOOK SIXTH.

THE CHARACTER OF THE REVEREND MOTHER JULIA'S PIETY.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER JULIA'S FAITH.

THIS sketch of the Reverend Mother Julia's life shows to what a degree she was guided in all her actions by a sentiment of faith; that, like the holy King David, this divine light directed her steps, aided her decisions, and gave force to her words. She saw God alone in everything, and this sentiment of faith was the source of the great purity of intention, the amiable simplicity of mind, complete abandon to the divine will, the filial love for everything connected with religion, and, at the same time, the superhuman courage in difficulty which were distinctive traits in our mother's character.

"I should mention one thing here which is rather uncommon," says our Mother St. Joseph. "It is, that Mother Julia, who was naturally quick, full of activity and ardor, and, besides, subject to nervous attacks, which generally incline one to reverie and undue predominance of the imagination, was absolutely exempt from all these aberrations. Her mind was free and clear, and she never allowed her imagination to obscure her liberty of mind. She was never preoccupied,

never absorbed in thought, but, whenever accosted, was always ready to attend, and the business presented was welcome—that is, if it related to God.

The lively faith that animated Mother Julia inspired great respect for the priesthood, and a profound sentiment of veneration for bishops. But her simplicity of soul preserved her from agitation or preoccupation when she had any intercourse with them. How many times have I seen her, on such occasions, keeping herself interiorly attentive to God, awaiting the favorable moment, the moment of grace, and when she did not find a chance to express her sentiments, she remained as undisturbed as if everything had gone to her mind; but when her turn came, she spoke with ease and clearness, giving proof, by her manner of expressing herself, of that interior ardor which always keeps to its aim—the glory of God and the good of the institute.

In her general or particular conferences, and in all her instructions to her children, Mother Julia was constantly reminding them of the importance of being guided in everything by a sentiment of faith. "If you yield, my dear daughter," wrote she to one of them, "if you yield to the first impulse, ever too prompt in you, it will, at times, deprive you of that peace of the children of God which is so desirable to possess. I recommend to you the holy practice of living in the presence

of God, which alone opens the door to the interior life. It is this interior spirit that is the soul, the life, and the mark of a real Christian: peace is one of its fruits, then comes love, and all together constitute the happiness of the soul in this life and in the next. What peace, even amid storms and tempests, reigns in a soul full of faith, that puts all its confidence in God!"

Again, Mother Julia suggests this sentiment of faith as a remedy to a person in the world who was afraid of going frequently to holy communion in a parish where the sacraments were seldom approached. "You know," said she, "that by the simple light of faith this human respect will soon disappear. Alas! what is a handful of people in the presence of God! He alone is great, and this world only a breath." She says, in a letter to her children: "I recommend to all my good children to live by faith, to live in the spirit of our institute. I hope they will strive with all their hearts to acquire it, and become well trained. I do not cease asking this of God with all my heart. They can never sufficiently appreciate the happiness of their vocation. Let them manifest a great esteem for it on every occasion."

During one of her journeys, she wrote to the sisters of the mother-house as follows: "I hope that all are getting along well, that the good God is the life of their souls. Ah! may they all, all

strive to become good by their constant purity of intention. My dear children, let us make haste, let us make haste to lay up a fund of virtue in the mother-house. How you will all have to labor! I will dwell further on this necessity at my return."

She wrote to a sister who was troubled in mind: "I adore the holy hand of God, who, while permitting the adversary to try you, leaves you all the strength of your faith to resist him, and remain faithful. Come, learn to be courageous, prudent, and, above all, to have a boundless charity for your sisters and every one. In all the events of life, my daughter, seek God alone, quite alone; that is what we should seek—what we should never lose sight of. He holds all the events of life in his hands. He knows how to derive the greatest glory from those things that, from our point of view, are the most unpromising. I believe that you are of my opinion, my dear child. I will repeat: God is immutable. I bless him that everything is as well as it is. Pray that I may always do what is pleasing to our Lord, and nothing more, for there is nothing desirable but his righteous will in all things."

A superior, fearing that the number of the children who came to school was more than the rooms could accommodate, represented to Mother Julia the sad necessity she would be under of sending some away. "Lay aside all human views," re-

plied the zealous mother, "to be guided by those of a living faith, a lively faith, a faith in God. If the school-room is not sufficiently large, we will arrange one up-stairs at my return. What a consolation it is to be able to diffuse a love for God among the young! and having only this desire, should we fear anything? Oh! my good friend, I am quite certain about your wishes. Receive all the good God sends you, but do not hurry them. There must be room for God to accomplish his designs. Say many things for me to my good children; tell them I hope to find them advanced in a life of faith, a life wholly given up to God, a life in God. If they knew to what a degree we need God in our holy state of life, in our holy vocation! This is seen when God tries his work Let us always do what the good God sends us, moment by moment, and always without any wish but that seemingly indicated by his adorable Providence. My good friend, cling to the good God; do all he requires of you; cast self aside, believing that you of yourself, like me, will only do everything amiss. If we could really let the good God act, all would go well. Endeavor to do so, and earnestly beg this grace for me, who, from morning till night, am doing I know not what."

It was especially in teaching the truths of religion that our first mother's faith manifested itself more particularly. We have seen that from her very childhood she showed a special love for the

catechism. She began to learn it almost in her infancy, and soon after to teach it to others. God imparted an unction to her words which gave her the power of exciting an interest among all who heard her. Her zeal was boundless. During the French Revolution, "her usual occupation," says a respectable witness, "was to instruct children. She spoke with ease, and explained the catechism with great unction and great facility. She effected a great deal of good in the region where she lived, and formed several young ladies to piety. I had occasion to see her several times, and was always astonished when I heard her speak of spiritual things. She directed the young ladies, and presided at their spiritual exercises, which they made at the foot of the bed, to which she was confined by paralysis. Her house was a kind of convent, and she was already looked upon as a holy woman.

The missionaries themselves sent her, for instruction, all those who were excluded from the sacraments by their ignorance. Seeing the benefit that resulted from her efforts, they made her in Amiens give two lessons a day in the catechism. Young girls were indiscriminately admitted, and even pupils from the educational establishments attended.

A pious Carmelite nun, who, in her childhood, had received instruction from our mother, wrote as follows respecting her: "Although your foun-

dress was then only a person in humble life, poor, infirm, and of no great education, she was imbued with the spirit of God and the zeal of an apostle. This good Mother Julia greatly contributed by her efforts to the re-establishment of religious worship in our town. Twice a day she assembled young girls around her, to be instructed in the truths of the Christian religion. After her cure, she gave her lessons walking around the room, and holding the catechism she explained in her hand."

When her congregation was formed, Julia redoubled her ardor to infuse into its members the lively faith, the respect, and the love for religious truths that filled her own heart. She gave them lessons every day in the catechism if possible, in order to teach them how to instruct others properly. On these occasions, the teachers themselves became pupils, Mother Julia asked them questions, and encouraged them in making suitable replies, with a care and solicitude which impressed them with the importance of this study—the only one necessary for salvation. She recommended them to meditate on what they had to say to their pupils, for, she said, "the most important thing in the world is to suitably instruct the children confided to you in the Christian faith." And the sisters enjoyed these lessons so much that they looked forward to them as a delightful relaxation after the labor of the day. The younger

ones were encouraged to obtain solutions to the questions, and to explain the principles or developments with clearness. Animated by her ardent exhortations, they everywhere labored in this apostolate. I give an instance of the encouragement Mother Julia gave the teachers of her institute in this function: "Your classes are full of poor children," wrote she to a superior. "Oh! how much pleasure this gives me! Endeavor to do all in your power to induce the children to pray well, and to learn their catechism and the principal mysteries, which are the particular points to aim at."

In her instructions, she often returned to the importance and sublimity of our vocation, which obliges us to teach the truths of religion. Astonished that the good God should deign to make use of us to accomplish things so great in the light of faith, she would exclaim: "Alas! what are we, my dear children, to be employed in a work so holy—that of guiding souls in the way of salvation? If we were penetrated with the sublimity of this function, what a rapid progress we should make in the interior life! We should become the glory of the church and the joy of her children." And then she would add that "one must be one's self thoroughly impressed with the beauty of religious truths to infuse an esteem and a love for them in the hearts of others. But you will tell me, there are so few that profit by it. Let us keep on sow-

ing the good seed. Paul sows, Apollos waters, but it is God who giveth the increase. When I see you at the head of such a multitude of children, I say to the good God: O Lord! grant my children that interior spirit which will keep them united to thee while they are instructing thy little ones. O my dear sisters! there are so few priests, your zeal should inflame you and make you fly to the instruction of so many children, who are wallowing in the most fearful ignorance. When I behold you employed in this work, you seem to me greater than all the potentates in the universe. If you retain the interior spirit, a sense of the presence of God in the midst of your occupations, what consolation you will have at the day of judgment, when all these young souls will be assembled around you to bless you for having shown them the way to heaven! Angels will envy your happiness. Perhaps God has destined you to effect the eternal salvation of several of their souls. And should it be only one, did not Jesus Christ shed all his blood for each soul? Did not God destine it to reign eternally with him?

"Every order has its own particular end, and its members make use of different means to attain it. Some make use of penances for the body, others of extreme poverty; others have for their aim the care of the sick:—each one according to his vocation; but we, my dear sisters, we guide souls in the way of salvation. Judge hereby

how greatly you should esteem your holy vocation!"

Mother Julia had great faith in the sacrament of penance. "Before going to confession," she said, "I pray our Lord for contrition. I cannot have it of myself, but I am sure he will grant it to me. When we make an act of contrition every day, we should be easy. Will not God pardon us when we ask him in sincerity?"—evidently showing that when she made an act of contrition, it was with her whole heart.

CHAPTER II.

MOTHER JULIA'S TRUST IN GOD.

THE Reverend Mother Julia's trust in God was equal to her great faith. Trust in him, union with him, and giving herself up to his good pleasure, were the ruling principles of her life. When weighed down with difficulties, perplexities, and multiplied cares, like Abraham, she hoped against all hope, and cast all her cares upon God. I have seen her assume, on such occasions, a pleasant and smiling air. "All this is not my business," she would say: "it is the good God's." Her course in difficult circumstances was, not to dwell much on them, but to pray our Lord to make known his will. As soon as she had come to a decision, she did not keep reviewing the grounds. "When I have decided," she said, "I think no more about it. The matter is settled." Not that she did not sometimes change her views, but she did so with peace and tranquillity of mind. How many times I have heard her say: "I ought to put my trust in God in my journeys. I see so visibly the hand of Providence in events which I do not know how to get out of, and, whenever I am perplexed, the good

God comes to my assistance. Therefore I do not worry about anything. You know I have no capacity. God has to do it all. I leave my room with no particular intention, but I seem to be led where I am needed."

To have a thorough comprehension of our foundress's trust in God, we have only to read the following letter:

"May our benign and merciful Saviour reign in all our hearts!

"Oh! yes, my dear children, I continually pray for you and for us all, that his pure and holy love may inflame our hearts and our energy in his divine service. I pray especially for you all, assuring our Lord that you desire nothing in this world but to promote the glory his infinite goodness expects from us all. . . . And do I not hear you replying, my dear children: 'Oh! yes, mother, our only ambition is to extend the glory of Jesus, our kind Master and our Redeemer.' Yes, yes! my dear children, I earnestly beg that we may have no other in all that we may do. Let your sole utterance to our Lord be, that you offer yourselves wholly to him, that he may accomplish in you his adorable will. Oh! how good he is! How much this adorable Saviour loves you! It seems to me as if his eyes were only on you all, as if he loved you as though there were no one else in the world, especially those who go to him with simplicity of heart, who manifest the most

trust in him; for do not forget that it is to those that hope most in him that he accords the most grace. The more you manifest your trust in him, the more he will love you. Can you refuse our Lord this consolation? . . .

"Say to good Sister R., from me, that God wishes in his holy service souls full of simplicity, who go to him as children to their mother. If she does not go in this way, she will have trouble, and that uselessly. Almighty God only wishes souls full of trust in him. If God is for us, who can be against us? A profound humility, an unquestioning obedience, a boundless charity for one another, and so strong a hope in God that all the evil spirits could not shake or trouble or affect it, are what will save you. Oh! my dear children, rely on him who is the strength of the weak. Remember continually that strength is made perfect in weakness. The more faults we see in ourselves, the more we should take refuge in the adorable heart of our divine Saviour. My heart is full of things to say to you, my dear children. I leave you to imagine them.

"Those who possess the genuine spirit of our vocation must have an intrepid courage, that by the grace of God they may resist the assaults of the world, the flesh, and the devil, which we can do with the assistance of him who created heaven and earth. Courage, my dear good children, courage. He who is our strength is all-powerful. He will

support and sustain us. He will aid us, and we shall conquer. We shall surmount every snare laid by the malign spirit, if our trust is great.

"Hope, love, complete surrender to the hands of the good God, should be our strength, our support. Ah! how good it is to confide in him alone. Oh! yes, yes. The good God sustains me like a kind father, so I keep on my way. Ah! my good friend, pray earnestly that all my steps may be made for God alone.

"My dear friend, let us confide everything to God, by a complete surrender of ourselves, seeking only, desiring only, his good pleasure and his greater glory; everything else is nothing—nothing at all."

CHAPTER III.

MOTHER JULIA'S LOVE FOR GOD.

THE holy author of the *Following of Christ*, drew the portrait of our reverend mother when he wrote the chapter on the wonderful effect of the divine love. "He who loves, flies, runs, and rejoices; he is free, and nothing restrains him. Love feels no burden, values no labor, would willingly do more than it can, complains not of impossibility, because it conceives that it may and can do all things. Whosoever loveth, knoweth the cry of this voice. A loud cry in the ears of God is the ardent affection of my soul, which saith, O my God, my Love, thou art all mine, and I am all thine!

All who had any intercourse with Mother Julia recognized hers as an ardent soul that never spares itself when there is a question of God's interests. She could write nothing, say nothing, without allowing to escape some spark of that fire which devoured her soul. "Ah! how good he is. How good the good God is!" was her habitual exclamation. "I wish I could make the whole world hear me!" This pleonasm of love was on her lips in prosperity and adversity. She uttered it to the sisters and to the scholars. It is constantly

recurring under her pen, and I think there are not many of her letters in which it is not repeated several times. She wishes her children to say it with her, and that every tongue should proclaim the goodness of God. "Sister N.," says she, "must not take a single step but for the good God. O my God! I do not wish to draw a breath but for thee alone!

"Pray for me, my dear child, that I may become little, very humble, and, above all, that the good God may reign alone, entirely alone in my heart, as I beg him to establish his reign of love in yours and in those of all men. Ah! let us beg it of our Lord for all hearts that belong to him, that he may set up in them the perfect reign of his holy love. . . .

"I hope, at my return, to find your souls renewed in the Holy Spirit. Carry all your troubles, my dear children, to this divine Spirit, that the fire of his holy love may consume them all. He is a God of love, who only seeks to consume the defects of both mothers and children.

"My God, my God! how sweet it is to love thee, and to sacrifice all for the love of thee alone —of thee alone, who art all love for us!"

Our mother's heart was like an arrow speeding to its aim, without deviating to the right or the left, or stopping till it has attained it. That aim was her divine Lord. She was constantly occupied in thinking, speaking, and acting according

to the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and this interior tendency was not with her an effort, but a virtue, because it had become habitual. This faithful spouse sought Jesus in all external affairs, at the same time her soul possessed him in peace. She adored him continually on the altar of her heart, that beautiful sanctuary adorned with all the gifts of the Holy Ghost. There she immolated herself; there she prayed and suffered, and awaited the knowledge of the divine will. In a word, there she rendered all her actions divine by uniting them to those of her heavenly Bridegroom. She had a tender love for Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. Her reverence for this adorable Prisoner of love was so profound that it was displayed in her exterior, and excited similar sentiment in those who beheld her at prayer. Her countenance was inflamed, and she seemed lost before the mysterious majesty of the tabernacle. Monsieur Dangicourt admitted her to daily communion at the age of twenty-two, and she acknowledged that, on that occasion, her soul was penetrated with a sentiment of happiness, and, at the same time, of surprise, that was inexpressible. It is certain that this permission was never neglected. "During the twenty-two years I had the happiness of living with her," says her worthy companion, "I can testify that she never omitted it once through lukewarmness or troubles of conscience. She was only deprived of it sometimes

in her journeys, but rarely even then, for her ardor and dexterity in attaining this happiness were great, and Providence aided her wonderfully in finding the object of her love."

"Ah!" she exclaimed, "if the world knew who he is who gives himself to us with so much love! Yes, if it knew the gift of God, how it would envy our happiness!" She did not disconnect the devotion to the Sacred Heart from that of the Blessed Sacrament. She, therefore, consecrated herself to the Divine Heart as soon as her attention was drawn to this devotion so dear to interior souls. She made a vow of propagating it by every means in her power, and not to pass a single day without speaking of the Heart of Jesus, without doing something to promote a love for it. It was from this Sacred Heart that she received the impulse for the formation of our congregation, and all the grace needed for this end, and there the Sisters of Notre Dame truly had their origin. "May the adorable Heart of the divine Saviour," exclaims Mother Julia, "inflame the hearts of my beloved children with the most ardent charity, and keep them in the strictest union with one another, seeking only to glorify this sweet heart by a sentiment of charity and simplicity in all things.

"My dear friend, tell me something about our good sisters. Are not their hearts yet entirely consumed by the divine and adorable Heart of my dearest Lord? Shall I again find hearts that are

not entirely filled with the desire of no other life than that of our dear Lord in them? O beautiful and divine life! What a foretaste of the bliss of heaven!"

The daily act of reparation, the invocations, the setting apart of the first Friday of every month, and the spiritual rendezvous of the members are practices which Mother Julia bequeathed us, and which date from the establishment of our order.

The sight of a crucifix inspired her with great and profound sentiments. She often kissed the feet, the hands, and the side with great tenderness. She always had one at the head of her bed. When she entered her chamber, she often took the image of Jesus crucified and pressed it to her heart. In the night, when she was filled with pain and not able to close her eyes, the crucifix again became her consolation, and she often clasped it to her heart. Our dear mother often told us that it was wrong to wear a crucifix with indifference and without paying it any honor. She recommended us to kiss it every time we took off or put on our rosary, and required us to hold it in our hands while saying the five Paters and five Ave Marias together, in the visit to the Blessed Sacrament.

CHAPTER IV.

OTHER RELIGIOUS TRAITS OF THE REVEREND MOTHER JULIA.

" HAT struck me the most in Mother Julia," says Father Sellier, "was the extraordinary gift of prayer which she possessed, and I believe she arrived at a high degree of contemplation. Before the Mass which Father Thomas daily offered in her room, and at which she communicated, she usually spent the three hours in this holy exercise. I allude now to the time when she was confined by paralysis to her bed. But I doubt not she would have retained the same prayerful spirit in the midst of the most distracting occupations, creating for herself an interior solitude in which to dwell continually with her God. This gift of prayer, cultivated to so high a degree, is a sufficient proof of the perfection to which the Reverend Mother Julia had arrived.

She used every means to promote the love and practice of the holy exercise of prayer, especially among the members of her congregation. "Our mother," says a note-book, "taught us with what simplicity we should approach God. She made us have recourse to him as little children to a kind father."

She said: "If we do not become prayerful souls, our institute will not stand. It is impossible to pray as we ought and not to be obedient, not to have charity for one another, for in prayer we go to learn of our Lord this maxim: 'Love one another, as I have loved you.'" She greatly recommended not making our meditation till we had carefully prepared the subject.

"Besides a spirit of prayer," says Father Sellier, "Mother Julia possessed a purity of heart in an equal degree. This virtue consists, as is well known, in detachment from all that pertains not to God; that is, in detachment, at first, from ourselves and then from all creatures. She was often heard to exclaim, with an accent no pen could recall: 'O purity of heart, purity of heart! My God, purity of heart!' She would have liked to receive the benefit of absolution several times a day; but, not being able to state in her confessions any voluntary fault, she found no confessor willing to hear her so often; and when she was asked why she was so eager to approach the tribunal of penance: 'Ah!' she would say, 'there is a special grace of purification attached to the sacrament which increases purity of heart more and more.'

"A third virtue, not less admirable, was her patience. She endured without murmuring all the privations resulting from her state of habitual suffering. This life, so painful to nature, lasted, as I have already stated, nearly twenty-five years.

God tried her thoroughly, as gold in the furnace."

"The germ of this infirmity," adds "Mother St. Joseph, "was never entirely destroyed, and she was all her life a victim of suffering—on the cross, but a cross of love. During the last eighteen months of her life, she became subject to nervous attacks, the severity of which she concealed from her children through her love of suffering and a long habit of concealing it."

"A fourth virtue," continues Father Sellier, "which should be regarded as the source and safeguard of all others, was her profound humility. Mother Julia loved to recall her lowly origin. She seemed confused by the attentions paid her, believing herself unworthy of the least deference. In her own eyes, she was only a poor ignorant person, incapable of being of use to any one, and a burden to all the world.

"Nevertheless, thanks to the good sense natural to her, and the light she received through her communications with God, she was gifted with a rare comprehension of the ways of the interior life, and judgment of character. I have known several of our fathers who were not above consulting her respecting the difficulties they met with in the guidance of souls and even in their own course. I recall, among other cases, a devotee undoubtedly given to airs and pretension, who greatly wished to acquire simplicity, which she

had heard mentioned as a powerful means of perfection. Questioned respecting this person, Mother Julia replied briefly: 'Be satisfied with her good-will. You might make her crazy; you will never make her acquire simplicity,' and she was right."

Mother St. Joseph mentions some other traits: "Our mother perceived that a certain sister failed several ways in her duty, especially in the respect and submission due her superiors, and for a long time she endeavored to bring her back, using by turns force, mildness, affection, and rigor, but all to no purpose. One day, after holy communion, she said to me, being much distressed: 'My child, it has been quite in vain that I have exhausted every means with her. What can I do? I felt after holy communion that that child is striving against God.' Indeed, she was entirely opposed to her superior in heart and mind, without our mother's knowing it, and this poor sister did not persevere."

It is a custom among us for all our superiors to give every year an account to their superior of the expenses and receipts of their houses. One of them thought she could put on the bill a sum which she proposed paying later, and she presented her accounts. Our mother saw they were in good order, expressed her satisfaction, and all passed off. After Mass, some days after, the sister being on the point of returning to her own house, our mother

said to her: "My child, your account is not correct. I saw it this morning in the presence of God, at the moment you were receiving the holy communion." The sister was perfectly amazed, not having mentioned to any one what she had done. She acknowledged her fault and regretted it extremely.

"The complete satisfaction I felt," writes one of the sisters who lived with our estimable foundress, "in giving myself blindly up to the guidance of our Mother Julia, for the space of ten years, is a strong proof that she was led by the Spirit of God; for I can say, without a shade of exaggeration, that her advice and the effusions of her heart were always adapted to my interior wants. I could mention several instances of this. One day I met her passing through the refectory. She stopped, looked at me some minutes without speaking, then exclaimed, in such touching accents that I could not refrain from tears: 'Continue, my child, to cherish the sentiments which now fill your heart. Meditate on these truths while pursuing your occupations. You will find it a very efficacious means of strengthening your vocation.' Then she repeated a passage from the Gospel which touched me at that time in a special manner.

"Another day, while before the Blessed Sacrament of the altar, I was dwelling on the words of the Apostle James: 'If any man offend not in

word, the same is a perfect man.' I went from the chapel to Mother Julia's chamber, for some reasons not connected with my meditations, and was astonished when she opened the door and said to me, 'Believe me, my child, there is a time to be silent, and a time to speak;' then sent me away without allowing me to tell her what I wished. Another time, I chose, as the subject of my meditation, Jesus Christ despised, and sent from Pilate to Herod, and, feeling a great interior repugnance to endure any expression of contempt, I formed a resolution to expose myself thereto in the various incidents of the day, in order to bring my self-love somewhat into subjection. I had no sooner finished my meditation than the good God so ordered it that I was obliged to see our dear mother for urgent reasons. She had hardly opened the door of her room before she closed it without listening to my reasons; doubtless aware, as on many other occasions, of what was passing in the depths of my heart. I always found her spiritual direction exceeding beneficial.

"I felt strongly inclined to note down the conferences and private instructions she daily gave us, but I did not venture to do so without advice or permission. After deferring for several weeks, with many interior struggles, to make known this desire, I resolved at last to submit it to Mother St. Joseph, but our Lord revealed my ardent though hidden wish to Mother Julia. While I

was at the holy sacrifice of the Mass quite absorbed about this resolution, she rose from her seat, and came and gave me a little tap on my left shoulder, saying: 'My child, do not fail to write down the daily conferences: the good God requires it of you.'"

She frequently talked to the sisters of the expansion of soul necessary in our vocation, in order to obtain any results from the children confided to us. "There is nothing feminine about our institute," she said. "We need courageous souls, who are not afraid of difficulties. This is why I advise you to have frequent recourse to the Holy Spirit to obtain the gift of fortitude so necessary to the members of our society." And her usual expression was, "We want souls where God can cut out of whole cloth."

"Obedience is the soul of the religious life; if we do not possess this virtue, we have nothing. Without obedience especially, there is no sister of Notre Dame."

"Urge upon my dear children the importance of obedience," she wrote to a superior, "without which they can never be the children of God, or mine."

"My dear child, if you wish to be a true servant of the Lord, there is only one thing to do—to renew this desire every moment of your life, by the constant practice of self-renunciation, doing only, moment by moment, what the good God

requires of you by the mouth of your superiors. Here is the road to heaven all marked out."

Mother Julia often gave practical examples of the importance she attached to the practice of this fundamental virtue.

A novice was about to make her vows. Mother Julia was desirous of testing her obedience. She told her in a casual manner to carefully shut up a room just cleansed, take out the key, and give it to no one. Shortly after, Mother Julia said to another sister: "Go and ask Sister A. for the key of such a room." This second sister was the mistress of novices, and poor Sister A., seeing it was her mistress who asked for the key, did not dare tell her the mother-general had forbidden her to give it to any one. She had to undergo a severe expiation for this fault. Mother Julia said to her soon after: "My child, you shall make your vows when you learn what it is to obey."

Our foundress had a particular love for the virtue of silence, which allowed her to be interiorly occupied with her God. She was not less attentive to its observance among the members of her congregation. Mother Julia was very strict in requiring a spirit of poverty in her children. A superior, who had come to the annual retreat, had (from want of experience, no doubt) allowed a night-dress of common material enough to be trimmed, a thing unheard of among us. Mother Julia saw it and carried it off. After night

prayers, she sent for the superior in fault, and, after a severe reproof, she burned the obnoxious garment in her presence, and removed her from her post as superior, though she was a very good religious.

BOOK SEVENTH.

THE SISTERS OF NOTRE DAME IN THE UNITED STATES.

CHAPTER I.

MOTHER ST. JOSEPH—MOTHER IGNATIUS—FIRST ESTABLISHMENT AT CINCINNATI—MOTHER MARY THERESA—FOUNDATION AT BOSTON—MOTHER CONSTANTINE—FOUNDATIONS IN ENGLAND AND GUATEMALA.

ON the death of Reverend Mother Julia, in 1816, her faithful friend, the co-foundress, Mother St. Joseph, succeeded her as superioress-general, a post which she held until her death, in 1838. We have given a short sketch of her youth in the foregoing pages. Brought up in affluence, with everything to attach her to the world, we have seen her devoting herself and her fortune to the service of our Lord in the person of the poor. This spirit has been so deeply impressed upon the congregation that a venerable bishop once remarked, in speaking of the foundresses and their work, that he did not wish for a greater proof of their sanctity than the vital hold which this love had taken on the hearts of their children. This we shall see in an especial manner when we speak of the foreign missions, which were undertaken two years after the death of Mother St. Joseph. During her generalate, the houses in Belgium increased in number, and God blessed their labors in a visible manner. The rule, the drawing-up of which had been one of the causes

of the troubles at Amiens, had gradually grown into its present form. It had been thoroughly tested during the lives of the two foundresses, the doubtful points retouched, so that at the death of Mother St. Joseph, in her eighty-third year, February 9, 1838, she left it perfect, needing no gloss. How much the order owes to her is unnecessary to add. Her spirit, so similar to that of her worthy companion, had perfected the work; her fortune had founded and endowed the first houses, and saved the congregation, in its infancy, from the many inconveniences which are to be met with, even in spiritual undertakings, from a want of pecuniary resources or a dependence on friends and benefactors.

Before going to her reward, Mother St. Joseph had seen the wisdom of many points which had been considered difficult, if not impracticable, especially that of having but one grade of religious in an order entirely devoted to education. A life of labor, teaching, and prayer seemed to the foundress a nearer approach to the models of religious in the early ages of the church—St. Paula, her daughter Eustochium, and other noble Roman ladies, to whom St. Jerome rigorously prescribed manual labor—"preparing the fire, cleaning lamps, gathering the produce of the garden," etc. This illustrious daughter in Christ, Paula, considered cheerful application to work more painful and more meritorious than fasting or wearing a hair-shirt. St. John of the Cross

resumes the essence of the religious life in these words: "Work, suffer, and be silent." Thus we see it was but a return to the primitive spirit of nuns, and a more perfect imitation of the life led at Nazareth, where Jesus and Joseph labored at the humble trade of carpenter, and our blessed Lady took upon herself the cares of the household, "for she had no servant to wait on her." Mother Margaret Hallahan used to say: "The more I see of human nature, the more I feel certain that humble and laborious employments are the best mortifications and the shortest way to attain true humility." A remarkable fact which we have seen exemplified in Mother St. Joseph and others is, that the more exalted the station before entering religion, the more earthly treasures they have renounced, the more humble and mortified they are. They have left all for their beloved Master, and do not desire to take anything back.

To the laborious spirit so deeply impressed on the Sisters of Notre Dame, both by the words and example of their foundresses, the institute owes its success, being able to adapt itself to any exigencies, and its members to undertake labor cheerfully, provided the glory of God and the salvation of souls are advanced. The houses established in England illustrate this in a particular manner, as we shall see when we glance at what they are doing at the present time.

Mother St. Joseph was succeeded in office by

Mother Ignatius, Lady Theresa Josephine Goethals, who had acted as assistant four years. Her administration had been so popular that, at the election of superioress-general, she received every vote but one, her own. A similar fact is related of the election of St. Ignatius, her glorious patron. As it was during her administration that the first foundation of the institute was made in America, we think it appropriate to insert in this chapter, particularly devoted to the order in the United States, the following notice, which appeared immediately after her death :

"The Reverend Mother Ignatius, *alias* Lady Theresa Josephine Goethels, was born at Courtrai, May 27, 1800, of parents as distinguished by their virtues as by their social rank.

"Endowed with quick penetration of mind and good natural qualities of heart, Theresa's education was solid and brilliant. As she advanced in age, she made rapid progress in the Christian virtues. On entering society, she was careful not to be drawn into a spirit of vanity or to acquire a relish for the false charms of the world—that stumbling-block to the noblest intentions and to the hope that the church founds on the virtuous conduct of youth. Theresa gave to her family and to her native city beautiful examples of virtue, accompanied by enlightened piety. Her charity to the poor and her zeal for the glory of

God were conspicuous. She was chosen president of a congregation of young ladies, organized to perform good works. Theresa formed the members into a number of sections, assigning to each its particular work of piety. The one for the poor was especially her own; she visited regularly indigent families, giving them help and consolation; like the valiant woman "whose right hand was open to the poor, and her two hands extended towards those who were in want," she sacrificed, for the relief of the unfortunate, not only the money destined for her toilet, but also that which she economized by repeated self-privations. Feeling herself called to a more perfect state, she did not hesitate to follow the will of God; she cast her eyes on the institute of the Sisters of Notre Dame; the spirit of detachment and simplicity which reigned in that community determined her choice. She hoped also by entering it that her superiors would one day send her to America to labor for the salvation of souls. At the age of twenty-one, she was received into the novitiate of the Sisters of Notre Dame; there her fervent spirit soon adapted itself to that of the institute. The love of poverty, abnegation, and obedience with which our Lord penetrated her fitted her for the eminent work she was afterwards to fulfil in his vineyard. Relatives, friends, wealth, hopes of the world, had been so completely renounced by Theresa, now Sister Ignatius,

that at her religious profession, two years afterwards, there was no sacrifice to be made, no last adieu to earthly attachments to be taken. She considered her vows as a new grace of God—a stricter and happier obligation to rise to the perfection of her state. In 1831, she was sent to Jumet in quality of superioress; her talents and her activity, her spirit of order, and her virtues contributed to give to that house a new lustre, and that excellent reputation which it still enjoys in the town. After four years she was recalled to Namur, to be counsellor and assistant to the Rev. Mother St. Joseph. In 1836, she was sent to found a house of the institute at Bastogne, and, the next year, one at Philipville. After the decease of Mother St. Joseph, in 1838, Sister Ignatius was unanimously elected superioress-general. In this new dignity, her humility and fervor shone more brightly than before. She regarded her position as far above her merit, and was deeply impressed with the responsibilities attending it, especially that of presiding over so many religious dispersed in the different houses of the institute; but a long practice of obedience, a thorough knowledge of the rule, and, above all, that supernatural light which is never refused to the humble, rendered her worthy and capable of commanding.

"The meek firmness of her direction was felt immediately. The union among the houses of the institute became more intimate; zeal increased;

the system of teaching, without losing any of its first solidity, took a wider extent, and became more brilliant. The ardent spirit of the mother was communicated to the daughters, and a new vigor was given to the young institute. Whilst assistant superioress, Mother Ignatius had gained the esteem and confidence of the whole institute by her general affability and her deference towards the first companions of the venerable foundress. During her generalate, the love and respect of the sisters for her increased; all regarded her as their model in obedience to the rules, the performance of duties, and the practice of every virtue; they submitted to her with joy, for her orders were given with kindness and discretion. It was evident that she was guided by the Spirit of God. Her zeal responded to the call for new foundations of boarding and day schools, sewing-schools for the poor, etc. However difficult the enterprise, she undertook it with joy, and was usually successful.

"Besides many establishments in Belgium, she sent a colony of sisters to America in 1840, at the request of the Bishop of Cincinnati, Rt. Rev. J. B. Purcell.

"In her last illness she showed a devoted mother's solicitude for the whole institute, and, even when the agony of death was upon her, enquired about the *atelier* [workshop], the sodalities, and her cherished poor children.

"Mother Ignatius departed this life March 16, 1842, in the forty-second year of her age."

We have seen that one of the motives which induced Mother Ignatius to choose the order of Sisters of Notre Dame, when decided to enter the religious state, was the hope of being sent to America to work for the salvation of souls. Her zealous wish was acceptable to God; although, in his wisdom, he did not see fit to call her personally to this field of labor, she was permitted to send her daughters. In taking leave of them, she made a double sacrifice—separation from her beloved children, and the renouncement of her desire to devote herself to the foreign mission. Only those who have burned with the same generous ardor can estimate what this must have cost her. One of her directors, Mr. Colsin, a man deeply versed in the secrets of the spiritual life, said, in speaking of her after her decease: "Mother Ignatius was one of those rare souls, few of whom are met with in a century; she was worthy of taking rank with a Gertrude—a Theresa!" Such was the person who governed the institute of the Sisters of Notre Dame, when accident, or rather divine Providence, brought, in 1839, Rt. Rev. J. B. Purcell, Bishop of Cincinnati, to Namur. This zealous pastor, seeing the necessities of his flock, and knowing how much depends on the education of youth, determined, during his visit

to Europe, to procure for his episcopal city and his diocese an order devoted to teaching. On his arrival in Paris, he engaged a colony of religious, who were to follow him to America in the course of the year. This decided, he made a hasty trip to Belgium, to see Mme. the Baroness de Copens; he found she was absent, making a retreat at the Convent of Notre Dame, Namur. Having called on her there, he met Mother Ignatius, visited the different schools under her charge, and was struck with the method and order. Here he saw what he desired, and said to Mother Ignatius that nothing could be more suitable to the United States; the education of the upper class was carefully attended to, the teachers trained to the needs and requirements of the times; a flourishing pensionate which enjoyed the confidence of the parents, and yet the great aim of the sisters was to devote themselves to instruct the poor, those most destitute either of the goods of this world or of grace.

Bishop Purcell spoke of the arrangements already made at Paris, which prevented his asking for Sisters of Notre Dame at once, but added that he hoped circumstances would, later, allow him to do so. Mother Ignatius, on her part, expressed the happiness she would feel in seconding his design. Shortly after the return of the bishop to his diocese, he received a letter announcing that unforeseen circumstances would

delay the departure of the religious he was expecting from Paris. He wrote immediately to Mother Ignatius, reminding her of her promise, and claiming its fulfilment. Monseigneur de Hessel, Bishop of Namur, and the superior of the reverend mother, was much opposed to the project, so also were the families of the sisters likely to be appointed for it; indeed, it appeared that the whole town of Namur was interested in the matter. Every one showed opposition, except those whom it most nearly concerned. Many prayers were offered in order to obtain the consent of Monseigneur de Hessel, without which no step could be taken.

Steam and telegraph had not then united the two hemispheres, and most of the information concerning the United States was obtained from the *Annals of the Propagation of the Faith*, and many confounded the diocese of Ohio with that of Oregon. Those better informed could not imagine a country hardly eighty years old to be, in some respects, as far advanced in civilization and refinement as the Old World. The friends of the eight sisters who were eventually named to go on the mission pictured to themselves such scenes as were realized later by the six sisters who accompanied Bishop Blanchet to Oregon.

When all obstacles had been removed, the missionaries were named out of the large number of

sisters whose zeal had been enkindled by the words and presence of Bishop Purcell. Of these, only one spoke English. It seemed, from a human point of view, a rash undertaking; they were going out as teachers to a new country, whose language, manners, and customs were wholly unknown to them, and yet, strong in faith, they did not fear. It is true, they did not quite understand the magnitude of the task until they found themselves in the centre of a large city, no way inferior to those they had left in their native land, and about to undertake the education of a class of children equal, if not superior, in intelligence to the pensionate at their mother-house. The system of education, too, was different; at home, much attention was given to solid principles; the pupils had fewer studies, but they were thorough in them. Their new scholars had already taken up what are termed the higher branches, but their knowledge was superficial. The sisters had learned the lesson, "Make yourselves all to all, in order to gain all to Christ," and they found that to do any good they must modify their system to suit the country, which they accordingly did at once.

On the 9th of September, the eight sisters embarked at Antwerp. There was quite a religious colony on board—Rev. Mr. Rapp, a Dominican; three fathers of the Society of Jesus, and others. They had Mass almost every day, vespers, and a

sermon on Sunday. The reverend Dominican father gave them English lessons. On October 3, we find the following little incident which came to break the monotony of the voyage: "After tea, Rev. Mr. Rapp complimented the reverend Dominican on the occasion of the fête, 'Notre Dame du Rosaire,' and presented him with a bouquet of white flowers which Sister N—— had made; the reverend father was much touched, and cordially thanked the company for this pleasant surprise. We asked him to put on his white habit, and the captain, although a Protestant, invited him to preach in English; both requests were complied with on the following day."

On the 19th of October, they entered the harbor of New York, and in their first letters expressed their surprise and pleasure at the beauty of the land of their adoption. Here they changed their religious costume for a secular one. Nuns are expected to be dead to the world, and consequently indifferent to the fashion; still, in civilized society, a certain regard is paid to the public eye, and, by keeping in moderate bounds, hopes are entertained of passing unnoticed. On this occasion, one would have said, the opposite course was pursued, and, had their design been to attract attention, they certainly succeeded. Imagine these eight ladies walking through the streets of New York, Philadelphia, and Cincinnati, one with a green silk bonnet, another a blue, the rest

brown, black, etc., not two alike, and the shapes as various as the colors; one point only seemed to have been kept in view, namely, to have them as little like the style of the day as possible. The bonnets may be taken as a fair specimen of the rest of the dress. When they appeared at High Mass in the Cathedral of Cincinnati, on the Feast of All Saints, many of their future pupils, who during the service could see only their heads, found it difficult to attend to their prayers. At the conclusion of Mass, a group gathered around the church-door to see these elegant ladies whose coming had been so long expected. It is almost unnecessary to add that, as soon as they were out of hearing, their personal appearance was canvassed with great merriment! Teachers and pupils often enjoyed the recital of that first impression, and the effect was not lessened when it was known that the sisters had supposed they would be considered, in this semi-civilized world, as quite well dressed.

As soon as their arrival was announced in Cincinnati, Bishop Purcell went to the steamboat, and gave them a truly cordial and parental reception. He thanked them for having come to labor for the good of his flock, said he would try to compensate the sacrifices they had made, but, as Bishop Whitfield had told him, in presenting the mitre, that it was not without its cross, so they should expect to meet with contradictions, etc.

The letters which Sister Louis de Gonzague and other sisters wrote abound with the kind consideration which Bishop Purcell showed them at the time; and, during the thirty years which have passed, his kindness has never diminished. All the Sisters of Notre Dame in Cincinnati, and the houses that have branched out from it, look up to him as to their father. He has admitted the greater part of the sisters to their profession, and, though obedience has scattered them in different directions, even as far as California, his name ever finds a first place in their prayers.

The Sisters of Notre Dame were, during two weeks, the guests of the Sisters of Charity, from whom they received the most cordial hospitality.

While looking for a suitable location for the new institution, the sisters took a house on Sycamore Street, opposite the cathedral. In their letters of those days, we find frequent mention of the kindness of the "Americans." Among the first and most devoted friends was Miss Ann, the housekeeper at the bishop's, who was careful to provide them weekly with fruit, vegetables, or fowl, and "pies every Sunday." She was always at the service of the community, and, until her death, continued to take the greatest interest in all that concerned it. The names of many friends are met with who still live, and have seen the small seed, sown in 1840, spring up into a large tree, keeping pace with the increasing needs

of Catholicity in the Queen City. At their arrival, there were two Catholic churches—St. Peter's Cathedral and Holy Trinity. The Sisters of Charity had a school for small children, divided into two classes, one for those who could afford to pay, the other for the poor, comprising in all about 120 pupils. The greater part of the Catholic youth were either sent to secular institutions or to distant religious boarding-schools. Thirty years have made a great difference. The city numbers now twenty churches, almost every one having a parish school; these are attended by thousands of pupils. For the higher class there are four academies. Sister Louis de Gonzague and her seven companions never dreamed of the success which has crowned their labors.

On their arrival, the bishop offered them a large farm in the country, suitable in every way for a boarding-school. Sister L. de Gonzague, though very grateful for the offer, declined it, saying, "We came to work under your eye, in your episcopal city, and cannot think of going to a place where we should be deprived of teaching your poor children." In a letter to Namur she says: "Rev. Edward Purcell told us, in jesting, that we could not have any poor, even in the city. Then, I replied, we shall return to Europe, as it is not our object to educate a limited number of boarders, but to seek souls, and we must have the poor."

On the 21st of November, the sisters had holy Mass for the first time in their little chapel, and were happy to possess the Blessed Sacrament under their own roof. In the meantime, they were looking for a house, as they could not open school where they were. Providence seemed to favor them. A gentleman who owned a large building about a square from the cathedral, offered to sell it to them, and on such moderate terms that they considered themselves very fortunate, and were installed in their present home a few days before Christmas. They opened school January 18, 1841. It was noticed that their first postulant, boarder, day-scholar, and free scholar, each bore the name of Mary. The schools met with favor at once; before the vacations, which occurred the 16th of July, they had five boarders, about sixty day-scholars, and the same number of poor. The Sunday-school, which had been taught by the ladies of the cathedral congregation, was transferred to the sisters. The Right Rev. Bishop permitted them to have Mass for the children in their chapel; many of those who then attended remember with gratitude and pleasure the sermons of Rev. Father Gleizal and of the venerable Father de Theun. Very Rev. Father Collins, V.G., was appointed confessor of the children, a duty which he fulfilled until the time of his death, 1865. Words cannot do justice to the indefatigable zeal of this devoted father. Every week during

twenty-four years, he gave a day for the confessions of the children; when the time for first communion approached, he gave them, twice a week, one hour's explanation of the catechism, and the last week of preparation he devoted entirely to his young charge. He heard all their general confessions; each child went three times during the course of instructions, and all on the eve of the great day. Every one was examined separately on the catechism. It was a labor of divine love, and Rev. Father Collins never showed weariness in performing it. The number of children was usually from one hundred to one hundred and twenty. On first communion morning, this true father appeared to be in his glory, and was repaid for all his labors. Thousands of the youth of Cincinnati made their first confession to him, and all will remember his paternal kindness and the assistance he knew so well how to give on that trying occasion. A clergyman having called to see the vicar-general, on finding him thus engaged, remarked: "It seems a waste of time for a person of your position to spend so many hours hearing the confession of children. Any young priest could do this." Father Collins replied: "I think differently, and consider this the most important of my duties. If great care is bestowed on the direction of youthful souls, we shall see the effects in the congregation."

From its commencement, the Nuns' School, as

it was called, was popular with Catholics and Protestants. The pupils were distinguished in society by their modest, retiring manners. The attention given to needlework and the other useful branches of education pleased the parents, while the gentle firmness of the sisters endeared them to their pupils. Their chief difficulty was to speak the English language. In their letters to the reverend mother, they notice the considerate kindness of the pupils, who, instead of laughing at their mistakes, would tell them the correct expression.

Rev. Mother Ignatius had the happiness of seeing the house of Cincinnati firmly established, and the number of pupils increasing so rapidly that she was entreated to send a second colony. Her death, March 16, 1842, was the first great trial of the new community. She had entered so zealously into the project, her letters were so full of interest in all that concerned them, her judicious advice had helped to smooth the first difficulties; and her kindness to forward to them on many occasions everything which she thought could be useful, as also articles of reward for the pupils, many of whom thus obtained the first statues of the Blessed Virgin or St. Joseph, for they were not to be found at that time in Cincinnati, and consequently were considered great treasures.

Mother Ignatius was succeeded by Mother

Mary Theresa, one of the first children of Mother Julia. Owing to ill health, the community was obliged, though reluctantly, to accept her resignation before the expiration of the first year of office. She was particularly devoted to the American mission, and, until her death, she took the most lively interest in all that concerned it. Although so short a time in charge, she sent three sisters to aid the house of Cincinnati, and founded the English mission.

In 1843, the Sisters of Cincinnati found they would have to build, and were anxious to procure a lot adjoining their garden. Providence again singularly favored them, and the following year they erected their first building, a long one-story house, brick on the alley side, and wood towards the garden. This was named by the pupils "Colonnade Row," and was considered quite a stylish affair; it contained a chapel and six school-rooms, three of which formed a hall on Sundays by opening the folding-doors, and hundreds of children assembled there for Mass and catechism. This addition was soon insufficient, as the boarders and day-scholars numbered 125, and the community received some postulants and six sisters from Europe: therefore another building was erected shortly after the first was finished. It was brick, two stories high, and contained a refectory, school-room for the boarders, the dormitory, and music-rooms. Both these houses have long ago

given place to others much higher, and enclosing the yard on three sides. The place is so changed that a pupil of those days would hardly recognize it now. The only defect is that it grew piecemeal, according to the wants of the moment, and is consequently an irregular structure. Such are the ways of divine Providence! How little could those who erected the first addition foresee that in less than ten years they would have twice built and twice pulled down the work and built again! In a few years, the sisters saw a flourishing boarding-school spring up around them, and, in 1860, they bought a site in the environs of the city, near Reading, where they built a fine establishment for the boarders, also a beautiful church. Here they have above 100 pupils. The day-school increased apace, and in 1867 numbered over 350 pupils. This induced the community to open a second house in the city, corner of Court and Mound Streets, which is attended by the pupils of that quarter; both schools are flourishing. But what shall we say of their labor among the poor—that cherished portion which, in the language of Sister L. de Gonzague, they had come so far to seek? Their first building was for them, and, when this did not suffice, they put up another containing some of the finest class-rooms in the city. In 1866, these could not accommodate the increased number, and the reverend fathers of the Society of Jesus of St. Xavier's Church, see-

ing that thus far the community had borne the whole burden of educating the poor who came to them, erected a building almost adjoining the convent, thus affording ample room for all.

To ten different parishes in the city the sisters go early in the morning, and return late in the evening. Here they have thousands of pupils, and year by year the number increases.

But the youth of the city are not the only persons benefited by the care of the community. Perhaps as much good is done by the sodalities for every age and condition of society; for, in these associations, after leaving school, and indeed all through life, they receive the instructions suited to their position and their actual wants.

Besides the chapel of the community, there is, for the sodality, a large chapel of the Blessed Virgin, with handsome altar and everything necessary for the holy sacrifice of Mass, which is offered here at stated times during the year. Here the ladies of the Maternity Sodality hold their meetings every week. The Sodality of the Holy Family is for those mothers whose position calls for more particular helps in the bringing up of their children. The good that this society has done is incalculable—families have been reformed, husbands and sons have been brought back to the right path, and many households date a new era of happiness from the day "Mother joined the Holy Family."

There are five sections of "Children of Mary," and the young ladies, mostly former pupils, have their own chapel, where they meet every week.

The whole Sunday, from seven A.M. to five P.M., is devoted to sodalists. Each section has its general communion day. Also, the Holy Childhood, Confraternity of Our Lady of the Sacred Heart, Apostleship of Prayer, each has its votaries here. The reverend fathers of the Society of Jesus of St. Xavier's Church are the directors of the sodalities, and devote themselves with indefatigable zeal to the spiritual good of the members. During the past thirty years, the community has been highly favored by the ministry of the fathers of the society. Indeed, the two works have grown up side by side.

We should not neglect to mention the libraries which are attached to the different sodalities, where all Catholic publications can be found ; this is an invaluable aid, as the books are properly selected, and all works dangerous to morals or faith rigorously excluded. Standard English writers, on all subjects, find a place with religious works in these libraries.

We have preferred finishing this *résumé* of the labors of the principal house of America, the centre from which the different missions radiate, before merely mentioning the branch-houses, with the date of their foundations, except Boston, which, being the first formed out of the diocese of

Ohio, may stand as a type of the others in the State of Massachusetts.

Of the foundations made from Cincinnati, the most important was that of Boston. This opened to the Sisters of Notre Dame an extensive field of labor. Until lately, they have been the only religious teachers for girls in Massachusetts; their schools in this State count thousands of pupils, and in no section are the sodalists more flourishing. The good the sisters do may be said to revert to Rev. Father McElroy, S.J., who applied for them to take charge of the parish school attached to St. Mary's Church. This venerable father was one of the two Catholic chaplains of our army in Mexico, in 1846. In going to join it, he passed through Cincinnati, and on that occasion said Mass at the convent. On his return, he again honored the sisters with a visit, and went into the different school-rooms, where he expressed himself much pleased with the order that reigned. In 1848, Rev. Father McElroy was appointed pastor of St. Mary's Church, Endicott Street, Boston, and one of his first acts was to obtain religious to take charge of a school of girls. His means were very limited at this time, and, consequently, he had to begin on the smallest scale.

Having decided to ask for three sisters of Notre Dame, he requested Right Rev. Bishop Fitzpatrick to write to Bishop Purcell on the subject This was done, and, after some delibera-

tion, Sister Louis de Gonzague, the former superioress of Cincinnati, with two sisters, started for Boston. Alluding to this lately, in a conversation with the venerable Father McElroy, he said: "I suppose no house of the order began on so humble a foundation, and none has produced a more abundant harvest of souls. The street where the sisters dwelt at first was so narrow that it might be called an alley, and the house corresponded; there was one small room for a parlor, another which served all the purposes of kitchen, refectory, and community-room. Children flocked to the new school, and soon every available spot was needed for class-rooms. Then Sister L. de Gonzague, whose zeal for the souls of the poor was unbounded, turned the attic into a dormitory for herself and sisters. It was a warm apartment in summer, and rather difficult to reach, as the ascent was by a ladder which disappeared during the day. This portable stair was on one occasion the cause of a little amusement to the community. Three sisters had newly arrived from Cincinnati, one to replace Sister L. de Gonzague, who, with another sister, was going to Belgium. These sisters were lodged with the others at night in the attic dormitory. The one who usually descended last, thinking all were down, removed the ladder. After morning-prayer, Sister L. de Gonzague, perceiving that some sisters were not present, went towards the dormitory, replaced the ladder,

and, on mounting, found two sisters quietly making their meditation. They knew it was useless to give any signal, as it could not be perceived in the lower story where the chapel was located."

The pupils increased to two hundred the second year of the establishment, and a small house directly opposite was secured for the community to dwell in. The sisters gave themselves heart and soul to teaching, and their labors were appreciated by pastor and people. The school continued to increase, and, in consequence, a public school in Lancaster Street was closed, and the building offered for sale. Rev. Father McElroy purchased it. The schools of the sisters were transferred to it in 1853. There they opened a private school besides the parish school. In 1859, they were enabled to build a fine addition, containing apartments for the community and classrooms for the private school. Lancaster Street, however, was not suitable for the community, or for young ladies of the latter school, though admirably situated for parish purposes, being in the midst of the poor. The very small yard was surrounded on all sides by high buildings. Want of pure air and space for exercise soon told on the health of the inmates, and the superiors were induced to seek for another location. They selected a spot near the public garden, and next to the Polytechnic Institution, corner of Berkeley and St. James Streets. Here they erected a fine

academy for the benefit of those who prefer that kind of education. The ladies of the Congregation "Children of Mary" hold their meetings at the beautiful chapel in the house. The sisters dwell at the academy, and those who taught the parish school still retain it. They go to Lancaster Street every day, and the school has lost none of its prosperity. January 1, 1871, it numbered seven hundred and ten pupils. The total number of sodalists under the care of the sisters in various parishes is one thousand seven hundred and sixty-five. They have also large Sunday-schools, and a night-school at their own house, attended by one hundred and twenty-one young women, who learn reading, writing, and ciphering.

Venerable Father McElroy has lived to see this work of education flourish in St. Mary's Parish, and extend into many of the surrounding parishes and towns. It is not yet twenty-two years since the first foundation of the Sisters of Notre Dame in Boston. At that time it was the only Catholic school in Massachusetts for girls. Now they are springing up on every side. The only difficulty is, to supply the demands for new parishes, and an increase of sisters for the old ones. Boston may stand as a type of the work Mother Julia's children are doing in the various towns around. Making themselves all to all, conforming to the spirit of the section in which obedience places them, we find that in Massachusetts they confine

themselves, with three exceptions, to parish or public school education, as that is the usual plan in the State.

The boarding-school at Boston Highlands, formerly Roxbury, is one of the most beautiful locations in the country. The sisters have built a fine academy and handsome little church, for the use of their pupils and the sisters of the different communities of Massachusetts, who assemble here during the summer vacation for their annual retreat. This year (1871), the spiritual exercises will be given by Rev. Father McElroy, who has gone from Frederick, Md., for that purpose, and also to preside, for the last time, at the examinations in the various schools—a duty which he has, for a number of years, attended to with paternal interest. As this venerable man is in his ninety-first year, it will be a last look at a work which he originated under the auspices of the late lamented Bishop Fitzpatrick, to whom the community of Notre Dame owe a debt of gratitude for his more than fatherly kindness during the years they had the happiness of being under his care. His love for children often drew him to Roxbury, and some of the most delightful recollections of the pupils will cluster around his benign presence, as they sat at his feet on the grass under the shady trees of their noble avenue, and listened to his kindly voice, or when, in happy anticipation, they strolled across the fields to meet him.

This house was rendered conspicuous as being the scene of the raid of the famous "Smelling Committee," which made such a stir, and which contributed to the downfall of the "Know-Nothing" party.

To the zeal of the various pastors in whose parishes the sisters labor, much of their success is due. The best understanding exists between them, and, while leaving the sisters to follow out their method of education, the pastors sustain them by their influence and assist them by their co-operation in overseeing the schools and directing the sodalities.

The present superioress-general, Rev. Mother Constantine, succeeded Mother Mary Theresa, in 1843. During her long generalate, forty-five establishments have been formed. Her first foreign mission was to send sisters to Oregon; seven sisters accompanied Rt. Rev. Bishop Blanchet and Rev. T. de Smet, S.J. Their voyage lasted six months; they doubled Cape Horn, and sailed prosperously up the Pacific until they entered the Oregon River, where they were near being wrecked. The new institution was founded at Wallamette, in the midst of the Indians and half-breeds. Many amusing anecdotes are related in the letters which, on every favorable opportunity, the sisters sent to their reverend mother. They opened a boarding-school; several pupils arrived at once, with their whole wardrobe—the apparel they had

on—and a blanket and skin for their bed. Such luxuries as combs and brushes were unknown and undesired. Each new-comer had for a time to be kept aloof from the others, until it was considered prudent to allow closer companionship. The board and tuition of these children were to be paid in produce, but it proved a very inadequate means of support, and the sisters had to till the ground themselves, and, like the gleaners of the Old Testament, gather in the harvest; this they did during certain hours of the day, the rest of the time was given to study. Most of the pupils remained at school only three or five months, just long enough to be prepared for first communion, and have a little of the Indian rubbed off, but not long enough to do them any permanent good. We extract the following from a letter to the reverend mother, March 3, 1845: "The branches of education are more multiplied here than in Belgium. The Indian mothers of our pupils know nothing of housekeeping, therefore we teach their daughters cooking, sweeping, washing, ironing, etc. Every Monday, Sister Mary Catharine washes with them, and she assures us that, without having had lessons in the art, she is becoming a proficient teacher. The children have an antipathy to domestic labor, and are often hard to manage. Their religious feelings are deep; all that strikes the senses makes a good impression on them, and it is not rare to see big tears in

their eyes at the sight of a crucifix or at the narration of the Passion of our divine Lord. Ah! my dear mother, when a sister, surrounded by these little savages, sees them touched with sympathy and compunction at her pious instructions, she easily forgets her trials, and considers all her sacrifices repaid."

We have seen the precarious footing on which the house of Wallamette rested; also, that the hope of effecting any lasting good was slight; this induced the Archbishop of San Francisco to ask for a transfer of the community to California, which took place in 1851. The new foundation was made at San José. Here the sisters have erected one of the finest establishments in the State. They have a flourishing boarding-school, 150 pupils; also, 160 day-scholars, and 255 free scholars. There is a branch establishment at Santa Clara, where they have 80 pupils. In 1856, a second foundation was made at Marysville, Diocese of Grass Valley, California. It numbers 122 day-scholars, 70 boarders, and 96 free scholars. The academy is not inferior to that of San José. The mission establishment at Dolores, in the environs of San Francisco, was commenced in 1866. It numbers 250 day-scholars and 200 free scholars. The mission of Calfornia is one of the most difficult of the order, religious education has so much to contend with in the character of the people. Worldliness seems to have a stronger hold on the heart, and

the mind seems less disposed to serious thoughts than in the older sections of the United States. Many of the first settlers, who were attracted to California by the gold mines, have made immense fortunes, and, being devoid of religion, all their interest is in the things of this world. Their children find no example and encouragement at home to develop and sustain the principles which have been imbibed at school. And yet there is a noble work to be done, and we may hope it is being done, silently, day by day. The next generation will no doubt be benefited by the labor bestowed on this, and, though they who sow and cultivate with so much devotedness may not see the fruit, they go on with the good work cheerfully, leaving success in the hands of God, for whom they have left all things.

Although this chapter is merely intended as a glance at the work of the Sisters of Notre Dame in the United States, it will, we think, prove interesting to mention that which the children of Mother Julia are doing for education in England and Guatemala.

In 1843, the Redemptorist Fathers of the Province of Belgium, having taken charge of the congregation of Penryn, Cornwall, asked for Sisters of Notre Dame, of Namur. A small colony was sent, and installed in a beautiful location, suitable in every respect for a boarding-school, but too far removed from the people to do good

to the poor and middle class. The prospect being unpromising even for boarders, and finding that they were going to lose their spiritual advantages by the departure of the Redemptorist Fathers, the sisters left Penryn, after a stay of five years, and went to Clapham, a suburb of London. Here they have thirteen acres of land beautifully laid out, and educate a large number of boarders and free scholars. This was considered the first foundation of the order in England; its glory, if we may so speak, has been eclipsed by its branch establishment in Liverpool, which commenced in 1851, at Sheepside, on the application of the Rev. Mr. Nugent, the "Father of nobody's children." Upon being placed at the head of this parish, Rev. Mr. N. saw the needs of his flock, and felt a particular zeal for the training of youth. He had heard of the character and labors of the institute of Notre Dame from Rev. Father de Bugnum, and decided to ask for its sisters. In his recent visit to America, Rev. Father Nugent, speaking of this foundation and the effects it produced, said: "The sisters opened a school for the better class in their own house, and, besides, took charge of a parish school, where they did immense good. I had a class of 100 children, under government inspection, in the most degraded quarter of my parish; vice and misery reigned there supreme; I asked the sisters to take this school, which I

had established in a large house that was allowed me rent free, because no one would dwell in it on account of its 'being haunted;' several murders and suicides had been committed there. There was not a respectable house in the neighborhood. The sisters expressed their willingness to teach these forlorn children, provided they would not be under government inspection; like most Catholics of that time, they feared to be drawn into a snare. But, had I yielded to this desire of the sisters, I would have lost the government grant, which I could not afford to do. At length I convinced the local superioress that the glory of God and the salvation of souls required a sacrifice of feeling, but the reverend mother and others to be consulted were not to be moved by any argument; the Belgian government had been giving trouble to the religious orders, and they feared to encounter similar difficulties in England. However, the reverend mother made her visit to Liverpool, and I used all my force of argument, but she was unmoved. As a last effort, knowing her love for the poor, I said: 'You will, at least, come and see the school?' To this she assented, and, on finding herself in the midst of the little outcasts, a witness of their poverty, she was touched with compassion. From the windows she observed the degradation in which these children were brought up, and, bursting into tears, said, 'Yes, father, we will

take the school, even under government authority.'" We think this must be the establishment referred to by the author of *Rome et Londres.* In 1854, Mr. Marshall, Inspector of the Queen's Schools, says: "It is only in the schools directed by religious that the true end of education is fully attained;" and he affirms that, with two exceptions, he knew of no schools, either for young men or for young ladies, which can compete with those directed by religious orders. He cites one quarter of Liverpool where the Sisters of Notre Dame have the charge, and says: "This section, where, a short time ago, immorality reigned, is now changed into a smiling garden of virtue."

This was the first connection of the institute of Notre Dame with government schools, and the sisters were so well satisfied with the honorable way in which everything was carried on by the inspectors, that later, when a Catholic Queen's college, or normal school, was about to be established in the north of England, they entered the list of competition, and the college was confided to their care. In order to devote their whole attention to the training of young girls who were destined to teach the Catholic youth of England, the sisters closed their boarding-school, and devoted themselves with all their energy to the pupil-teachers. The success of the past seventeen years proves that Heaven blesses the work.

We find the following notice of this institution

in the Brussels journal, *La Bien Publique:* "A gentleman, as distinguished for his intelligence as for his devotedness to the interest of the Catholic faith in England, publishes, in the *Review of Christian Economy*, Dec. 30, 1862, a very important work on the schools, refugees, etc. He praises, in high terms, the normal school of Liverpool, directed by the Sisters of Notre Dame, of Namur, Belgium; while some violent sectaries among us are not ashamed to decry the education given by religious orders, and are trying to banish from our schools these admirable teachers, the English proclaim aloud the eminent merit of this system. It is an honor to Belgium to have given England a community which has, in a few years, obtained so much success. The *Review* says of the Queen's colleges: 'There are two Catholic schools destined to train teachers for the whole country; that for the north, at Liverpool, has given diplomas to 419 pupils in seven years. These young ladies give universal satisfaction in the different establishments which employ them to teach; their classes are remarkable for order and discipline. This normal school trains its pupils in domestic duties, that they may teach others so useful a part of female education. This magnificent establishment is a model, and is regarded as one of the best conducted and most useful establishments in England.' In January, 1871, this community numbered: 73 normalists;

11 candidates; 61 pupil-teachers (these young ladies, 145 in number, board at the establishment); 436 day-scholars; 5,009 poor scholars, in six parishes; 1,628 night-scholars; 299 Congreganists, not attending schools of Notre Dame; 1,025 Sunday-scholars, not attending schools of Notre Dame; in all, 8,542."

We are sorry it would lead us too far, for the present, to give the particulars of the working of this establishment as we saw it lately. These devoted sisters teach all day, or, rather, they give the religious instruction and direct the pupil-teachers. The latter have studies every day from four to eight o'clock P.M., with all the scholastic exercises they need.

The night-schools are kept at certain seasons in the different parishes; to these the sisters go in cabs at six o'clock and return at half-past eight. It is a laborious life, but the sisters embrace it without fear, knowing the reward that is laid up for them in heaven.

The last foreign mission of the daughters of Mother Julia, like their first, has been to America, but now we find them down among the tropics.

If distant from home and friends, they have the pleasure of feeling that their services are appreciated by those for whose sake they have made so many sacrifices.

This mission was remarkable, as it was the government of Guatemala which applied for

them, and the sisters met a right royal reception. They were welcomed with military honors, but we anticipate. In 1854, the President of Guatemala applied to the reverend mother at Namur, for sisters to take charge of the young girls at his capital, for the religious communities in Guatemala were of the contemplative kind. The reverend mother, who did not wish to enter an entirely new field of labor, as the sisters would be so far removed from the rest of the order, answered that there were many difficulties in the way, and, even if there were no other reason for declining, she had appointments in view that would employ all the sisters she could dispose of during four years to come. Nothing daunted, the administration replied that they would wait the time named, and trusted they would then receive the religion so much desired. In the beginning of the fourth year, the Bishop of Guatemala, at the request of the President, informed the reverend mother they were making preparations to receive the sisters, and would expect them at the end of the year; that funds to defray travelling expenses, etc., etc., had been remitted to a person named in the letter, who was also instructed in the duties of the business. This showed that the Guatemalians were in earnest, and the reverend mother determined not to disappoint them. There were, as usual, many candidates for the undertaking, the missionary spirit being a characteristic of the

Belgians; their disposition blends the ardor of the French temperament with the cooler blood of the German and the enterprise of the English.

We insert here an extract from the journal of the sisters who went on this mission:

"PANAMA, November 15, 1859.

"I resume my little journal, my dear sisters, not having been able to write since we left St. Thomas's. We arrived at Colon on Wednesday, at six P.M., but did not leave the boat until the next morning. A beautiful little shallop took us up the river to a place where the English consul, Mr. Cowan, was awaiting us. In assisting us to land, he said, 'I have received a letter from the government of Guatemala, in which I am charged to take very good care of you.' I gave him the letter of Mr. T. Martin, the minister. The consul attended to the arrangement of our baggage. He told us that we had to remain at Colon or Chagres, and that he was going to take us to a house where we could rest.

"He was so kind as to say that on the morrow he would accompany us on our way across the Isthmus of Panama. He would not permit us to pay our fare, saying that he was authorized to attend to the expenses. Thus God is pleased, in order to aid and comfort us, to raise up good protectors who show us every attention. Mr.

Cowan took us to the best hotel in the city. We did ample justice to the breakfast which was served us, for sea-sickness vanished the moment we touched dry land. About eight o'clock the next morning, the consul came to conduct us to the station; he accompanied us half-way across the Isthmus; this gentleman and the conductor of the cars showed us so many polite attentions that we felt confused, at the same time grateful to the providence of our Heavenly Father. These gentlemen had procured provisions for the route, so that the Lord had truly prepared in the desert a table for his children. The view of nature that we had during this short journey elevated our souls to the Creator of so many wonders; we could contemplate at leisure those immense trees, the existence of which we hardly credited when we saw them in books. . . .

"The English consul at Colon had announced our arrival by telegraph, so Mr. Gorzoga, Jr., was awaiting us at Panama. He took charge of our baggage, and then we drove to the French hotel, where our rooms was engaged, as we had to remain there until the 18th, awaiting the steamer which was to take us up the Pacific Ocean.

"Sister Superior wrote to the Bishop of Panama, requesting him to assign us a confessor. We hoped to have the happiness of communicating the next day, which was Saturday. He replied that he would come on the morrow to visit us in person.

A priest, who had heard we were Sisters of Charity, came to offer us his services. He was on his way to Havana, but, as we awaited the bishop's reply, we could not accept his services.

"The weather is excessively warm; although we may sit perfectly still, the perspiration trickles down our faces, and moistens not only our bandeaux, but our guimpes, and, if we stir ever so little, our clothes are saturated. In writing, I am obliged to put several sheets of paper under my hand.

"The Right Rev. Bishop came during the afternoon. I cannot tell you how good and amiable he is. We had heard him highly praised before we had the pleasure of seeing him. The Bishop of Guatemala had written him that seven religious would pass through Panama, so that his lordship appeared to be already acquainted with us.

"He offered to hear our confessions himself, and we were happy to accept his proposal, for he is a very holy man, a religious of the order of St. Francis. The next morning, Sunday, he heard our confessions before his Mass, at which we had the happiness of being present and receiving holy communion. How our hearts ached on entering his church! It is very large, but so neglected! Everything so soiled and torn that we were quite struck. What pained us still more was to see *dogs* in the house of God! There were, perhaps, five or six persons at the Mass. Three or four

old women were seated on their heels, over in a corner, reciting their rosary together. We could not comprehend the cause of such ignorance in a country calling itself Catholic, but our astonishment abated a little yesterday (15th) when the vicar-general came to see us. He informed us that the country was much changed, as the government had taken everything. Several years ago, they pillaged the churches, which were very rich and beautiful, and the episcopal see had been vacant five or six years. The present bishop has only been here since 1855 or 1856. He tries to replace all, little by little; still, the church is so poor that it can hardly pay the sacristan, and the priest's salary is very small. This poverty is felt even more at the seminary, where they are sometimes days with little to eat. Monday, in going to Mass, we remarked a few more people than on Sunday; they tell us that there are generally more in the other churches. We go at six o'clock to the cathedral; it is but a few paces from the hotel; we remain until the bishop's Mass. They sing two High Masses every day; that at which we were present only lasted a *quarter of an hour*. There is but one seminarian to sing, and he went so quickly that one could scarcely say a Pater and Ave during the Gloria. During the day, we employ ourselves with Spanish, we write exercises, read, learn by heart, etc. We think we are making great progress, as we commence to understand

all that is said to us. We are alone all day, except when we are visited by those for whom we had letters of introduction.

"We were just going to breakfast, at noon (dinner is at four o'clock), when the bishop again came to visit us; we were much pleased, for he is so good! His dress differs from that of the European bishops. He wears a white flannel cassock, covered by a large silk cloak with two capes, a round hat, of which the rim is turned up on both sides, and is at least a half a yard high; his attendant is a little boy of nine or ten years, clothed in a black cassock, over which he wears a red sash; his cap is square like those of the priests This costume is very singular, but we suppose it is that of the children of the choir.

"The bishop again questioned us regarding Belgium and our institute; he also spoke much of Guatemala and his diocese. He told us, among other things, that he had already asked to have Jesuits in Panama, where priests are so necessary. He had also made several attempts to obtain female religious, but had not succeeded. To this he added, 'Would it be possible to have some of your sisters here? even three or four; ask your superioress-general.' Sister Superior desired to know if he spoke seriously, and he replied in the affirmative. We shall pray, then, that we may have neighbors, companions of our happiness. Oh! there is so much good to be done in Panama!

I am sure, my dear sisters, many among you will desire to be sent here, but let me warn you beforehand that you will suffer from the heat! They say that we are now in the last month of winter, and already we are obliged to change our bandeaux two or three times in a day, and our guimpes are half-wet with perspiration. However, we are becoming accustomed to it, and it agrees well with Sister Superior. I return to the bishop. He was with us about half an hour when it commenced to pour rain, which it does every day at this season. He said, laughing, that we had done like St. Scholastica with St. Benedict, as he had to remain with us for two hours and a half. For the last three years he has been not only bishop, but secretary, writer, and professor of Latin grammar. He was at Rome in 1843, when the Archbishop of Malines was created cardinal; he, at that time, passed through Belgium. On his return to America, he sojourned five months at Guatemala. He asked us each our name; Sister Mathias having told him hers, he exclaimed: 'You are the apostle!' and upon hearing she was our cook, added: 'That accounts for her being the strongest —she eats the odor of everything before giving it to the others!'

"Since the first day of our arrival at Panama, we have again been visited by Mr. Gorzaga, accompanied by his partner and his son. He came to see if we wanted anything, and recommended

us not to be anxious, assuring us that he would arrange everything regarding our embarkation. The next day, when the heat was intense, Mr. Gorzaga, Jr., brought us our tickets for the boat. Sister Superior had not presented our letters of recommendation to the Governor, nor to the Lieutenant-General of Panama, as Mr. Gorzaga had provided for all our wants. We had again the pleasure of seeing the English consul of Colon, who came to renew the offer of his services in case other sisters came to join us, adding that a word from our reverend mother would suffice. The next morning, when we went on board, he was there to assist us, and to ascertain for the last time if we were in want of anything. Monday, we had a visit from the consul of Guatemala, Mr. Manuel José Hurtado, who had only learnt of our arrival through the papers. Two months previous, the President of Guatemala had written to him, in order that he might tender the necessary services. Sister Superior thanked him gratefully, but told him she had felt it unnecessary to trouble him, as Mr. Gorzaga had attended to all our business. She added that, as she had the honor of seeing him, she would present Mr. Martin's letter, which was addressed to him ; but it proved to be for his brother, the lieutenant-general. She did all she could to prevent it, but he also came to call on us. Hs spoke highly of Guatemala, but complained of Panama, where, he says, there is a

party calling itself liberal which opposes everything good. We understand, from all we hear, that the poor bishop's hands are tied. Another day, we were visited by the railroad conductor, who told us, among other things, that many persons of the city had importuned him to introduce them to us. Happily for us, he wisely replied that he was not well enough acquainted with us to permit this liberty. This Mr. Killiams offered to send our letters by New York; he is coming this evening, so we are hurrying to close the packet, leaving all that we may have forgotten until we reach Guatemala. We hope to arrive at our destination on the 29th or 30th. O my dear sisters! it is necessary to be here to know the good one can do; our zeal and courage spring up afresh at the sight of all that has to be done.

"SR. M. PHILIPPINE AND COMPANIONS."

"GUATEMALA, December 1, 1859.

"MY DEAR SISTERS: We have at length arrived at our destination, all in perfect health, and happy beyond expression. A thousand thanks be rendered to God! We hasten to make you share our joy, and to tell you how the remainder of our voyage passed. We trust that our letters, written at St. Thomas and Panama, have reached you before this. We left the latter city on Saturday night, November 19. The vessel was stationed five miles out of port. The passage was made, as

at Southampton, in a little steamboat, at eleven o'clock P.M. This was not very suitable for us, so Mr. Gorzaga, Jr., who accompanied us there, advised us to cross in a canoe. When we reached the shore, we found that it could not come in close, so we were obliged to allow ourselves to be carried thither in a negro's arms. The black advanced to take Sister Julie de St. Joseph, but, alarmed, she drew back. Sister Superior then presented herself, and I was the second. He had much trouble in carrying me, for the water was half-way up his legs, and I came near losing my shoes on the way. We were all very much afraid, particularly Sister Mathias, when we had to leave the canoes and mount the ladder on the side of the vessel—a gymnastic exercise that appeared very difficult for us to perform. Our steamer is named the *Guatemala*, and is a superb American ship, of which the construction is entirely different from any in which we have previously sailed.

"The ports of Punta Arénas, Realéjo, Union, Libertad, Acapulta, and San José, appeared very insignificant: there were only two or three houses in sight, and a few others in the interior. We arrived at Punta Arénas during the night of the 21st, and remained there until the following evening. Among the passengers who here came on board were the Vice-President of Costa Rica and the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States, who took much interest in us. The capital of

Costa Rica is only a few miles from port. About six weeks before, the inhabitants had revolted, the president was roused in the middle of the night, and with great difficulty had succeeded in escaping. At Realéjo, a ship-of-war was stationed, and as soon as our vessel appeared on the horizon, they made preparations to attack us, the officers supposing the banished president to be among our number. Fortunately he was not, and we thanked God, who had delivered us from the impending attack.

"Wednesday, 23d.—Since we left Panama, land has never been out of sight. We cannot sufficiently admire the magnificent spectacle presented by the mountains, which form a part of the Andes range. To-day we perceived the smoke rising from some of those volcanoes which are found in this part of America. On our arrival at Libertad we heard volcanic noises, resembling thunder, rumbling in the distance. A French officer, accompanied by a captain of cavalry and four soldiers, also another passenger who had been with us all the way from Southampton, left us at San Salvador. The last-mentioned passenger came to fulfil the functions of rector in the university of that city. The soldiers had been asked of the Emperor Napoleon, by the government, to drill the troops who have no knowledge of the military art. When we went on board the *Shannon*, the officer, who had learnt our object in going to

Guatemala, said to us one day: 'Sisters, we are going to the same country, but on a widely different mission, as you go to teach peace, and we, war!' These gentlemen were very happy then, for they expected to make their fortunes here; but when they saw how miserably poor these ports were, particularly that of San Salvador (Libertad), they appeared totally discouraged. In leaving us, this brave officer said, rather ironically, 'Sisters, there is the capital of our country. Do you not think we have been wise to leave France to come here?' Hearing them speak thus, we looked at one another, and each one said mentally, 'Guatemala will always be a great source of riches for our zeal while we find there numerous souls to save.' We left this port the next day.

"Saturday, 26th.—During the day we perceived more volcanoes, one, among the others, called the Asaler. This sent out a very thick smoke, and in the evening we saw several sparks. It was a beautiful sight. We have remarked every day an innumerable number of fish following in the vessel's wake, and several times we have watched a species called 'souffleur' (small whales). They are nearly eighty or ninety centimetres long. They throw up water to a great height, in the form of a fountain. It is very interesting to see them. The evening of the same day (26th), a gentleman came to tell us that the mountains of Guatemala were perceptible in the distance. On seeing them our

hearts beat with joy and gratitude to God who had so happily conducted us to the end of our journey. We had passed the evening in the port Acajutla. They left it at midnight, and on Sunday, 27th, we arrived at San José de Guatemala, at six o'clock A.M. We remained on board waiting for Providence to send us some one to conduct us to the shore. Sister Marie Beatrice said, laughingly, 'Wait! they will soon come for us, in a canoe with colors flying.' Her prediction was verified. A few minutes after, the commander of the port arrived, and told us he was sent to receive us. When the time came to enter the boat, we were not very much at ease, for the sea was quite rough. They could not conveniently incline the ladder, and, as it was placed horizontally, like a plank, we had to step from one round to the other, at the risk of falling through into the ocean moaning below, and it was necessary to make a leap to enter the barque. The sailors could not row more than half-way. The men on land had to draw us in by ropes, not without great difficulty, the waves being so high and strong. In leaving the canoe, it again became necessary to resign ourselves to being carried by negroes. They were better than those of Panama. Making with their arms a species of chair, several of us required four to carry us to the shore.

"Mr. Serigiers, of Antwerp, nephew of Sister Superior, had been since the preceding evening at

San José, for they expected us on the 26th. He came to meet us as the negroes set us down. He had doubted whether he would be able to be there on that day, and in consequence had informed his partner of it, and had sent a letter for Sister Superior, in which he gave her all necessary directions This gentleman is the brother of our lamented Sister Gertrude (Mlle. Van Dyck), who died several years ago. He was much pleased to see and speak with those who had known his sister. General Solar, deputed by the government to receive us, had also arrived at San José the preceding day. They took us to the governor's house, where he came to meet us. He had a *déjeuner à la fourchette* prepared, at which he himself waited on us. He then preceded us on horseback, to prepare a lodging for us midway. We had been expected in Guatemala on the preceding Monday morning, 28th. As we were a day after the time, Mr. Serigiers had arranged with the general, that, leaving San José at ten o'clock, and taking two or three hours' rest at Escuintla, we could, at midnight, resume our route. But the rainy season having ended only two weeks previous, the roads were, in consequence, still in a bad condition. We had five horses to our carriage. These animals are smaller than those of Europe, but equal them in strength and endurance. About two o'clock we halted at the Orange Hotel, which, notwithstanding its refreshing name, was nothing better

than a miserable cabin. The numerous and immense orange-trees growing in the vicinity suggested this title. We were again the objects of universal attention. In passing through the village of Managua, we alighted at the church. While the drivers were engaged in watering the horses, we entered, and in a few moments the edifice was crowded with the curious, and on our way to the carriage we were followed by a troop of fifty or sixty persons. Notwithstanding our great desire and the efforts made to advance, night surprised us on the road. Mr. Serigiers was obliged to alight from the carriage to show the way to the drivers, as a thick mist obscured the moon, thus leaving us in almost total darkness, groping along so slowly that it was ten o'clock at night when we arrived at Escuintla, one of the most flourishing cities of Guatemala. General Solar had had prepared a supper for us at the house of the governor, who received us with open-hearted hospitality. Feeling much fatigued, and seeing the impossibility of pursuing the route during the night, on account of the numerous precipices, the gentlemen decided it was more prudent to defer our journey till the morrow. Mr. Serigiers immediately despatched his servant to the capital to apprise them of the cause of our delay. He then conducted us to the residence of his mother-in-law. We could not sleep, but, as the jolting of the carriage across the rough roads had left us in a condition that ren-

dered a night's rest acceptable, we availed ourselves of this occasion, and thus prepared for the morning's journey. General Solar is governor of the city of Amatitlan, situated eighteen miles from Guatemala. He had arrived there during the night, and was awaiting us. In passing through, the servant had also informed him of our delay. This good general gave us an extraordinary and very unexpected reception. He did everything in his power to show how much pleasure it gave him to see us. We were met, a half-mile from the city, by a detachment of cavalry, the military numbering about thirty, all in grand array, with lances and flags, and at a given signal they presented arms. Our carriage passed between the double file of soldiery, which, with the captain and trumpeter at the head, followed us as an escort to the city. Judge, my dear sisters, of our confusion and embarrassment! Arrived at the public square, 'Grande Place,' the crowd was so compact that our horses had great difficulty in making headway. The people pressed on all sides to catch a glimpse of us. After such a long journey, we were quite dusty. As the ladies of Guatemala were to meet us some distance from the city, the general himself, accompanied by his colonel, brought water, etc., for us to wash our hands. They then left us alone, and, while we were making our religious toilets, several cannon were discharged. The breakfast prepared for us

might more properly have been called a magnificent banquet, and, apart from the overabundance, came very *à propos*, as we had, with the exception of a cup of coffee at five o'clock, taken nothing that day. The general and Mr. Serigiers were our only companions at table, the captain serving us. In truth, we were confused at the attentions lavished upon us, but perceiving these to be a prelude to other honors, we were obliged to submit to them. We had scarcely commenced our repast, when the musicians of the National Guard entered the governor's yard, and gave a brilliant serenade. The room in which we were was decorated with flowers of surprising beauty, while even the bottles, dishes, and napkins were ornamented with ribbons of divers colors. The captain presented Sister Superior a superb bouquet, composed of almonds and raisins. Thus your seven poor sisters were the objects of an ovation they were far from expecting or desiring; but the laudable end of this brilliant manifestation was to make the people understand the value of a religious education. So with this thought in our minds we could truly say, 'All for the greater glory of God!' All the politeness shown us has been attended with such delicacy, and the joy manifested at our arrival was so sincere, that gratitude and confusion were our emotions on that occasion. But the honors did not end here. We had expected to continue our journey soon after

breakfast, but Mr. Serigiers told us that the general desired us to spend the remainder of the day at his house. On our arrival he had sent a courier to acquaint the authorities of Guatemala of this new delay. We could not prevent it, as these gentlemen had charge of us, but, had we been aware of that which followed, we would have attempted to change this arrangement. Several ladies of the city, knowing that we were detained, asked to be presented to us. While they were with us, the indefatigable musicians again executed several pieces, among others the 'Daughter of the Regiment,' as that was of European composition.

"The curé of the city also came, and as the church is directly opposite the governor's house, we asked his permission to pay a visit to the Blessed Sacrament, to perform our exercises of piety. It was instantly granted; but, he added, he would return to conduct us. Ladies who had not yet been introduced asked the general to allow them to make us an offering, that thus they might have an opportunity of seeing us; but he replied, 'These religious do *not depend on alms!*' However, he made them enter, and we were occupied with visitors until four o'clock; we received them with our best grace, but sighed for the peace and quiet of our convent. The females of Amatitlan are very affable. Their street costume consists of a large shawl, which envelops them

from head to foot. Bonnets and hats are articles unknown in this place. We tried to express ourselves as well as we could in Spanish. Several children were already presented to us as pupils, and oh! how rejoiced we were, feeling once more in our own proper sphere. We dined with the general and Mr. Serigiers. When the meal was finished, the curé came to take us to the church. Two ladies of the Third Order of St. Francis, clothed in their feast-day habits, received us there. This day was the Feast of the Holy Rosary, called *Rezados*. The solemnities had taken place on Sunday, but the procession had been postponed until Monday for our benefit. It was forming on the Place when we arrived at the church. I assure you we would not have gone had we known that upwards of three thousand persons were assembled there, with all the troops of the garrison. The general had arranged everything; he made us pass between two files of soldiers, who at our approach presented arms, and at the same moment the band burst forth in a grand strain of melody. Imagine our feelings, my dear sisters, in the midst of all this excitement. We made our meditation, etc., alone, the procession having left immediately after our arrival. They do not carry the Blessed Sacrament in these *Rezados*. The Blessed Virgin is placed under a magnificent dais on a gilt throne, surrounded by four angels and beautiful artificial flowers. The throne rest-

ed on a car, much ornamented, and drawn by four horses. The curé, seated on the front of the car, recited the rosary with the people, who accompanied the procession. It was a touching spectacle to behold this vast concourse of people following the cross which was at the head. The *Rezados* started at five o'clock, and did not return until nine, having made the entire circuit of the city, which is quite large. The statue had no sooner been placed in the church, than they commenced a series of most beautiful fire-works, which, without being seen, we could witness from the governor's. We left Amatitlan at six o'clock, and, much to our regret, the cavalry again joined us on the Place. The general having procured three carriages from the city authorities, these gentlemen desired to drive us themselves; the general, accompanied by the colonel, following us in his own, both in full uniform. Our diligence came behind the carriages, while the captain and cavalry brought up the rear, and escorted us to the boundary of Amatitlan, about five miles from Guatemala. When we arrived at a village, the troops took the lead, presented arms while we were passing, and then followed. We had time, in travelling, to admire the beautiful scenery. The road is cut through the mountain, and must have been a work both difficult and expensive. In the valleys we could here and there perceive small cabins, inhabited by

Indians, who cultivate the land surrounding their homes. These valleys are superbly beautiful. We noticed sugar-cane, maize, and immense plantations of mopals, a kind of cactus for the culture of cochineals. One plantation alone produces over $100,000 worth annually. Towards evening, we passed through a forest of palm, banana, orange, and other trees. The bananas grow like cabbages in our kitchen gardens. We have seen some of these trees whose leaves measured half a yard long, and at least half a yard wide. The orange-trees, laden with fruit, had trunks equalling in size that of the acacia which shades the grotto at our mother-house. The wild-flowers here surpass in beauty those cultivated with so much care in our hot-houses. Since we left San José we have been always in sight of the volcanoes Agua and Fuego; the former casts out water and the latter fire and stones, more frequently during the month of January. Old Guatemala lies at the foot of these two magnificent mountains. We beheld the smoke, and could easily discern the mouth of the crater, which was a frightful spectacle. Near the volcano of Fuego another one is forming, called its *little son;* this continually increases, but will not, they say, have an eruption until its father is extinct! At the foot of Agua we passed near the Pacific. This mountain is twenty-four miles from the capital; it has thrown out fire, but is, at present, extinct.

These volcanoes command, for their summits, the most elevated plateaus in the country. It is stated that clouds gather round Agua, attracted by the interior of the crater. Ice forms there, and is used by the Guatemalians; we drank water in which it had been melted. A little further on, we perceived the volcano of Pocaya. Although smaller than the two others described, the smoke issuing from it is quite thick. We passed within a short distance of a most remarkable grotto, called St. Peter's, which can accommodate two hundred men within its depths. There are many others, but the inhabitants, in general, dare not penetrate them, as they are the haunts of wild beasts, but especially of serpents, which are numerous in this country. Two cataracts, formed by a neighboring river, flow from St. Peter's grotto; the former falls 150 feet, the latter 18. The noise made by the falling water is grand and appalling. The boroughs or villages through which we passed on the route were inhabited by Indians, natives of the country; they are short in stature, have large faces, copper-colored skin, and very long hair, which the females roll with red strings and twist on top of their heads like a student's cap (*toque*), which gives them a most singular aspect. We met a large party of these Indians on the road going to the market at Escuintla, carrying all their wares upon their backs, yet they travel as quickly as a

horse, making several miles an hour. There were also on the road immense herds of large cattle led to pasture, two hundred and more in a single drove. Everything around us was so strange.

"At length we came in sight of Guatemala; our hearts beat rapidly as we thanked God for the care he had taken of his servants.

"The archbishop had sent carriages to await us at San José. While we were traversing the mountains, the ladies of the city, with his highness and the members of the commission, were preparing a brilliant reception for us. They rode out three miles from the city to meet us. About nine o'clock two carriages came up; in the first was Mrs. Serigiers, Sister Superior's niece, with her little Raphael. We alighted to speak to this lady and her friends, then resumed our journey; but in a few minutes we found ourselves in the midst of a large party which arrived in thirty carriages. As soon as we were in sight, the ladies came toward us. I cannot tell you, my dear sisters, with what affection they received us, what joy they manifested at having us at Guatemala; with what delicacy they inquired about our health and voyage; and, finally, what great regard they showed for the religious who came to devote themselves to the welfare of their children. When a movement was made to remount, there was quite a confusion, caused by each lady wanting to have one of us; those who did not

succeed went to Mr. S——, saying, 'We have no sister; please give us one.' He replied, laughing, 'As you have thirty carriages, and there are only seven sisters, it is impossible.' Finally the debate was ended, and the governor-general of Amatitlan came to bid us good-by, and returned with his cavalry. Our cortége proceeded; we soon met Bishop Berrutia, coadjutor to the Archbishop of Guatemala, accompanied by the Bishop of San Francisco; they approached Sister Superior, who was in the first carriage with Madame Aycinena, wife of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Madame S——, her niece, and a young lady interpreter. As soon as Sister Superior perceived their lordships, she alighted to receive the blessing of Monseigneur B——. As we followed with the other ladies, he blessed us at a distance, then reentered his coach, and proceeded in advance to the cathedral, to make preparation for singing the *Te Deum*. Nothing could be more imposing than our long file of handsome carriages, accompanied by gentlemen on horseback, and advancing in the greatest order. At our entrance into the city all the church bells rang, and continued their joyous peals until the end of the *Te Deum*. The crowd that gathered in the street to see us was immense; as soon as a carriage containing a sister appeared in sight, it was greeted with cries of joy and welcome. When we drew near the cathedral, we could scarcely pro-

ceed, much less descend from the carriages. The bishop with his clergy awaited us at the door; when we stood before him with the ladies, he told us to form our community, and blessed us; then we followed the clergy to the middle of the nave; several children preceded us, strewing the way with flowers. The church was full. At the moment of our entrance the organ struck up. They told us they would have fired cannon had they not feared to alarm us. We were glad they omitted this honor, for we had already too much for our taste. Our places were prepared for us in the centre of the principal nave, where we knelt on a magnificent carpet, for benches and chairs are unknown in the churches of Guatemala—everybody kneels on the floor. The bishop intoned the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving to God for our safe voyage and happy arrival, after which his lordship and clergy reconducted us to the church-door. We were not allowed to walk to our vehicles, they carried us; the ladies who followed could hardly force a passage through the crowd. We drove to the houses destined for us. The yard and door were ornamented with garlands and wreaths of most superb flowers, the hall was decorated in the same manner. It was truly our reception-hall, for we received again the congratulation of the ladies and of the gentlemen of the government. General Zarala presented us with wine, and some ladies

followed with cake, etc. Little by little, they all withdrew, but only to return two hours later, for those who had come to meet us, forty in number, wished to offer the first dinner, at which several of them waited on us, and Mr. L. Batres, General Zarala, Doctor Luna, and Mr. Serigiers dined with us. Each lady furnished a dish and two bottles of wine. During the repast we did our best to express ourselves in Spanish to testify how grateful we were. But our hearts sighed for the end of the day, and the happiness of being once more alone. Dinner over, they showed us through the house. The dormitory looked as if our own hands had prepared it—crucifix, holy-water font, nothing was wanting. The ladies asked if we were satisfied with the house, but were especially anxious to know if we were pleased to come to Guatemala. You can imagine, my dear sisters, what a cordial affirmative reply we made. They constantly repeated, 'Me alegro mucho de verra V. V.,' and 'We are delighted to see you.' Finally, everybody retired. Bishop Berrutia granted us the favor to have Mass the next morning in the little oratory which had been prepared for us; all things necessary for the Holy Sacrifice had been obtained from the church of the Capuchins.

"In the evening, the rector of the Jesuits' church called on us, and, as the bishop had permitted, he told us that a father would come

at six o'clock the next morning to hear our confessions. Everybody is eager to serve us, but, among all these kind people, I must particularize Madame Luz Batres, who shows us a mother's care; her sister and brothers second her perfectly. These ladies had been occupied during two weeks in preparing everything. When M. Batres came to meet us with his two sons, he was presented by Mr. Serigiers as our first benefactor, and truly his kindness to us confirms this title every day more and more.

"Yesterday, Sister Superior went to visit the convent of Belem, which we are to occupy later. Bishop Berrutia was there to receive her; several gentlemen and ladies who take an interest in our establishment were also present, with a large number of young persons who belong to a sodality of the Blessed Virgin. There are many convents here, but the religious are cloistered, and do not instruct youth. There are fifty churches.

"The Mmes. Batres, our principal benefactresses, took Sister Superior and two sisters in their carriage to Belem. The bishop received and conducted them to the church, where they sang the *Te Deum*, with organ accompaniment. His lordship then requested the sisters to go through all the apartments of the house, to see what changes they desired. The convent is very large, and, though unoccupied and neglected for a long

time, it appears to be in a good substantial condition. There are two gardens, one of which is immense; they each contain several fountains. The church is very rich; it is public; and six times a year they have their exposition of the Blessed Sacrament. The greatest of these feasts is Christmas, at which time a great number go there to receive Holy Communion, and to contemplate the beautiful life-size portraits of the infant Jesus, the Blessed Virgin, and St. Joseph.

"You would, doubtless, desire me, my very dear sisters, to give you some particulars about this new field opened to our institute. I will try my best to satisfy you.

"Guatemala is the capital of the state of Guatemala, one of the five independent republics of Central America. This city is situated 75 miles from the Pacific, and 210 miles from the Caribbean Sea, on an immense plateau, 4,560 feet above the level of the sea. At this height perpetual spring reigns, the temperature being that of the month of May in Belgium. December is the only month that is a little cold, owing to the north winds which blow at that time. There are but two seasons in these countries—the dry and the rainy; the latter begins in May and ends in October, but even during this period there are intervals of beautiful weather, and, usually, the mornings are lovely; towards noon the clouds gather; and at two o'clock it rains in torrents. Near

evening the sky becomes serene; no rain falls during the night. The sun sets, all the year round, at about six o'clock, with a brightness unknown out of the tropics. Night succeeds almost without transition. . . . The state of Guatemala is divided into seventeen departments; its population is 1,000,000. The capital has 40,000 inhabitants. There are 500,000 Indians in the state; they cultivate the ground of the plateaux, raising wheat, other cereals, and potatoes, which they bring in abundance to the markets. The different elevations of these mountainous districts afford all the productions of Europe, as well as of the tropics. . . . Guatemala is governed by a president elected for life. General Carrera, at present in office, is highly esteemed. . . .

"Hoping, my dear sisters, that your prayers will draw the blessing of Heaven on our labors, we remain, your affectionate sisters,

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The community of the United States comprises three hundred and forty-four professed sisters and eighty-five novices. When we compare the number of laborers with the number of souls they instruct, we see that the sisters have a pretty busy life, and must have preserved the laborious spirit imprinted on the community at its foundation.

The writer of this chapter, who was one of the group who made merry over the dress of the good sisters when they appeared for the first time in the streets of Cincinnati, and has seen the institution grow up to its present proportions, would, in gratitude for benefits received, wish to add to this imperfect sketch the high encomiums frequently heard bestowed on the daughters of Mother Julia by ecclesiastics and others who are in a position to appreciate their self-abnegation and zeal; but this would not be agreeable to those whose wishes must be consulted. How applicable to the Sisters of Notre Dame are the beautiful words addressed by Dr. Newman to the Children of St. Philip Neri: "My dear children, did you ask me, and were I able to gain some boon for you which might distinguish you and your successors for the time to come, persecution I would not dare to supplicate for you, as holy souls have sometimes supplicated, for the work of the order is a tranquil work, and requires peace and serenity to do it well; nor would I ask for you

calumny and reproach, for to be slandered is to be talked about, and to some minds notoriety itself is a gratification and a snare. But I would beg for you this privilege, that the public world might never know you for praise or for blame, that you should do a good deal of hard work in your generation, and prosecute many useful labors, and effect a number of religious purposes, and send many souls to heaven, and take men by surprise how much you were really doing when they happened to come near enough to see it; but, that by the world you should not be overlooked, that you should not be known out of your own place, that you should work for God alone with a pure heart and simple eye, without the distraction of human applause, and should make him your sole hope, and his eternal heaven your sole aim, and have your reward not partly here, but fully and entirely hereafter."

THE END.

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